

THE CHURCH CONNECTING WITH UN-CHURCHED MEN:
BUILDING AND REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
THROUGH CONVERSATION

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
MAY, 2011

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Document**

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ABSTRACT

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This project investigated how the Living Church in McBee, SC, could build or re-build relationships with un-churched men utilizing conversations. The methodology consisted of qualitative and action research which included: interviews, questionnaires, conversations, and fellowship activities. One finding was that un-churched men believe in God and are open to an engaging relationship with the church that reaches out to them. The researcher concluded that the church has been negligent in the supervision of its mission for making disciples of all, especially men. The researcher calls for renewed efforts by the church to build bridges for men to re-enter the covenant community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful accomplishment of this research was due to the fact that there were those who shared their skills, time and support .There are numerous individuals whose assistance was invaluable, however, the following are singled out for special appreciation:

- Marilyn Evans, D.Min., mentor of my focus group, The Ministry Of Supervision and 21th Century Leadership Formation, at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. Her dedication to the program and unselfish time given to each student meant so much to each of the students. Her commitment guaranteed that each student would successfully complete the program.
- Thanks to my professional associates and special thanks to Elder Alonzo Johnson, Ph.D., professor and pastor, a man who had much work to do yet, took the time to share and walked with me on this journey.
- The entire focus group, The Ministry of Supervision and 21st Century Leadership Formation who covenanted to be family, friends and confidantes.
- Context Associates and congregation at the Living Church in McBee, South Carolina, for their tolerance, cooperation, support, and encouragement during the past two and a half years. Without them this project would not have been possible.

- The men who participated in this project, by putting themselves in a place that was a little uncomfortable, but yet held out faithfully to the end, I thank them.
Without them this project would not have been possible.
- Above all, Jesus Christ, who taught us how to fish for humanity and he promised “...I will make you fisher for people.”

INTRODUCTION

The absence of males in the church has been an ongoing trend. This demographic trend has crossed cultural, racial and denominational lines. It is indeed a misfortune for the church to have arrived at this place in the history of the faith community to discover that a very important segment of the community has been left behind. Whether men left on their own or somehow got lost in the process as a sheep gets lost by wondering through a hole in a fence, men must be sought out. The Living Church in McBee, SC is seventy per cent female compared to its thirty per cent male population. This ratio is not an acceptable one and the church is now seeking ways to reverse this trend.

Therefore, the purpose of this project was to explore ways in which the church can connect to build or rebuild relationships with men who are un-churched. Men have been distance from the church for various reasons and continue to journey down a path that is leading further away from the faith community. Questions such as these have been asked, “What do men want from the church?” or “What can the church do to reclaim those who have been disconnected from the faith of the church?” The church is the agent of God on the earth working to build relationships and discipleship with those who are outside the community. This study led the researcher on a journey to open a pathway that would allow men to work on coming into fellowship with others from the faith community. This study was built on a simple plan that would be male friendly and reintroduce the community to those who are on the outside.

The project was directed by the researcher who is the senior pastor of the Living Church, located in McBee, South Carolina, a small community town. Those who participated in this study were contextual associates from the congregation of the Living Church. There were eight males and two females from the faith community. Even though this project was about building relationships with men, females were instrumental in this process because the community called the 'church' is made up of both male and female. The un-churched men who participated were mostly men who have a family member who are part of this faith community and they were invited randomly. These men were invited to participate in a project that was designed to build or rebuild relationships between them and the church.

The church is a covenant community where men and women come together to form relationships. Men have been missing in the church for a long time and now is the time for the church to consider its call to reconcile with those who are not in the community. God has called the faith community to walk the life of reconciling. This project was about supervision, covenant and relationship building or rebuilding.

This project invited the men to have supervisory conversations with church leaders, general conversations, and personal fellowship as well as to have their voices heard. This project was not designed to transition men back into the community of faith at the time of the project because there was not enough time allotted. This project was designed to build relationships and in time reintroduce un-churched men back into the faith community as active participants.

Chapter one describes the focus of the project. It details why this ministry focus was chosen. In this chapter the reader will gain insights about the researcher and the context in which the researcher designed this project. There is a clear indication why this project is important to the researcher. Chapter two explores and explains why this area of

ministry was chosen and insights into how this ministry was designed to work. Chapter three outlines the theoretical foundation for understanding male relationships to the church.

In Chapter four the methodology is given in detail. This study called for interviews and questionnaires that would serve as instruments to understand the thoughts and ideas of men concerning the church. The researcher compares before and after thoughts and ideas of the un-churched men concerning the church. Chapter five details the outcome of the research. This chapter introduces the data that were collected. This chapter reveals that men indeed want relationship but are yet disenchanted with the community of faith. This chapter gives an analysis of the data. Finally chapter six contains reflections, summary, and conclusions that were experienced during this project. This chapter reveals personal thoughts of the researcher and makes suggestions to what could be done to further this project for a greater outcome. The researcher recognizes that the presence of men is vital for the faith community to reach the highs that were ordained by the creator God. The natural families suffer when men are absent; likewise the church suffers when men are not in place. The research reveals that men want to be in the community of the church, but the church has failed to use its evangelistic tools of the gospel. The Living Church will be in a better position to aide men in their path back to the church as they work together to build or rebuild a working relationship that is Bible based and Holy Spirit guided. The community of faith has been given another opportunity to work within the confines of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19. The Living Church is looking forward to experience the Holy Spirit's movement as the church and the un-churched come together as the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The Church Connecting With Un-Churched Men: Building and Rebuilding Relationships Through Conversation

The gender gap in the Living Church is very notable. The ratio of female membership to male membership is three to one. The lack of male attendance has captured the attention of the researcher, who is the pastor, and other leaders of the church as well as the congregation itself, especially the female attendees. The researcher has made it a top priority to combat this gender gap by pursuing “why men are absent?” and by designing a ministry model that would connect un-churched men with the church to build or rebuild a relationship between the two.¹

The Context of the Ministry Focus

The Living Church

The researcher founded and organized the ministry of the Living Church, a Pentecostal/Apostolic congregation. The church has its humble beginning with the writer as the pastor and two other persons who were female. At the first service, the writer was

¹ To build or rebuild relationship will be used throughout this project. Some of the men once had some form of relationship with the church (rebuild) and the other never had a relationship (build). The goal of relationship building is the same for both groups.

the only male present, alone with five women. The first five or seven months there were no other males in attendance. Several women came often and visit the ministry, the women's support kept this small congregation afloat. Eventually some young men began to come to the church but were not interested in participating in the activities of the ministry. They attended the worship service and then left showing no interest in Bible studies or Sunday school. Men coming to worship and leaving as soon as the service was finished seem to be normal in many of the churches that the writer had attended. Many of these men came because their mothers, wives or girlfriends attended church. Conversations with men have often indicated that the church requires more from the congregation than the church is willing to give back in return. Therefore many of the men are suspicious of the church's motives.

The Living Church is an African American congregation in a small rural town. There are four other African American congregations in the town of McBee, South Carolina; the Living Church is the only Pentecostal congregation. According to the 2000 United States Census Bureau report "...McBee has a population of about 714 persons, of the 714 reported, African American made up 45% of the McBee community."¹

Women make up seventy- five percent of the Living Church attendees. The membership of the Living Church according to 2009 church records is about 250. The age range of the Living Church is as follows:

60 and older	15%
36-60 years of age	40%
20-35 years of age	20%
Teenagers	25%

¹ United State Census Bureau 2000.

On a weekly basis, there are usually around fifteen to twenty-five persons, mostly female visiting the worship service who are not members. The education level of this congregation is: Eighty percent are high school graduates, of the eighty percent of the high school graduates twenty percent have some form of college education. Twenty percent of the congregation are college graduates and work on a professional level. Jobs in this congregation range from manufacture workers, nurses, educators, city councilmen, law enforcement, and some entrepreneurs or other professions. Ninety percent of the workable ages are employed.

In the McBee community the Living Church is considered a large congregation. The church building is brick with a seating capacity of about five hundred. The church has several Sunday school rooms, prayer chapel, several offices, a fellowship hall, a large dining room and a computer lab in progress. The church owns over forty acres of land, including houses, and one large building which will become an educational center in the future. One important note, seventy-five percent of the Living Church membership comes from outside the McBee community. They commute from several towns from a radius of fourteen to seventy miles way.

The mission statement of the church is: "To become a house of power based on the foundation of the forefathers (the Apostles) of the first century church, as they demonstrated the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we strive to become a house of power through spiritual, social, educational, and financial empowerment to the body of Christ, for all people, we (the church) are the City of Hope." The lives of the people are being changed because the people from within the community of McBee, as well as those who are commuting, are learning and growing because of the various backgrounds of the

members. The members are learning and growing because as new people come into the community of faith they bring with them different life experiences, these experiences have a direct bearing on each member. Therefore, the context of the church is one of a continued movement, which has not been halted by any particular traditions from which the people were accustomed. The church is progressive in its ministries. One thing that makes the ministry progressive is the initiative the congregation takes in moving the church outside of its four walls to the people. The Living Church believes that if the people will not come to them, then they (the church) will go to the people. The Living Church continues to seek new and aggressive programs that will enhance its members and the community at large by equipping them to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. Some of the programs are: Adult Education & Literacy, Bereavement Ministry, Children's Ministry, Hospitality Ministry, In-Home Bible Fellowship (IHBF), Men's Ministry, Prison Ministry, Good Samaritan Ministry, Woman to Woman Ministry, Single's Ministry, the Audio/Video Ministry and Helping Hands Ministry.

The leadership of this church is motivated to push for excellence in its worship services, as well as in community outreach. The pastor is the main coordinator of the working ministries of this church. The church leadership team consists of several deacons and trustees which assist the pastor in overseeing the entire ministry. The church has a minister of music who works along with the pastor to outline a working musical and worship experience. The church also has a team of lay ministers who assist the pastor in making sure that the mission of the church is carried out. There are leaders placed by the pastor over auxiliaries so that the ministries of the church can work effectively. The

persons who are in leadership in this church are chosen members whom have shown dedication and faithfulness to the success of this ministry.

According to conversations with the other pastors of the community, it is the women who keep the doors of the churches open with their attendance and financial support. The writer and other pastors have engaged in conversations about the absence of men in their congregation, but never put into action a plan or a ministry that would be attractive to men and one that hopefully can create trust and a relationship between the church and un-churched men. The researcher invited the pastors of the community to have conversations concerning the gender gap in the church. Three out of seven pastors met to engage in conversations held in the conference room of the Living Church. The pastors all agreed that men are missing in the church. One interesting thing that was noticed by the researcher is that the pastors place no blame on the church for the absence of men. The pastors believe that men are not spiritual as women and because of that they believe men are absent. The researcher suggested evangelistic strategies such as “taking the church to the street.” The pastors were not sure about outreach ministry. They felt that prayer meetings and Bible studies were all they could handle at this time. The researcher believes that prayer meetings and Bible studies were not enough to attract men to the church. The church is not the church until it is able to put others first. Bonhoeffer said, “...the church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell people of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others.”² The pastors agreed to talk more on the subject, but at the time of this writing there have been no more conversations.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 382.

The Pastor's Question "Why Are Men Absent From The Church?"

The writer was born into a family that was reared and nurtured by a loving single mother who often referred to herself as "the mother and father." His mother was always present and attentive to the needs of the family. She was a hard worker and never complained about being the sole provider of the home. There were many lessons to be learned from her, one especially was "work hard and smart, and you will succeed."

Nevertheless, at an early age, the writer had thoughts about the absence of a male presence in the home. Maybe it was God or maybe it was nature saying that a complete and whole family unit consisted of a mother and a father. It did not feel right that his mother had to work so hard, hard like a man. The writer has always believed that a man and a woman were the same in essence but not the same in function. The writer grew up thinking that it was the function of men to be the providers of the family so that the function of the mother could be less burdensome.

The absence of men in this writer's life brought many thoughts and questions to mind. Some of the thoughts were: "Where are the men?" "What do men really do?" "When I become a man what will I do, how will I act?" and "Will I have a live-in family." While grateful for his mother's love and her protection, the writer lived with the thought, "she can teach me to be good and moral person but she can never teach me to be a man." The writer has always believed that in order for a boy to become a man he must see a man, walk with a man and talk with a man, a man created in the image and likeness of God.

The lack of males in the writer's life put him on a journey of searching, seeking and asking questions about the role of males. It appeared to him that men were alienated from the community and the family. The writer's family moved several times during his childhood, and in each community, there was less and less of male presence. Men would show up, but not long after their presence was known, they would be gone again.

The writer became interested in God, religion and the church at a very early age and can't remember a time when God was not a part of his life. Even when there was no full concept of God, the writer believed in God and sought to know God. The writer remembers listening with opened ears as the older ones in the community, mostly women, talked about God and how much they loved God. The women talked about God as if God were their lover or husband. The few men heard talking about God, spoke of God as if he were a friend or some kind of good guy. The women seemed to have a real relationship with God that was personal and fulfilling and expressed such phrases as "He is my husband, He is my mother, father, sister and brother, He is my everything." The women were emotional about God and Jesus. On the other hand, the men were less passionate about the way they spoke about God or Jesus. The men would say "He is a battle axe in the time of war", "He is a God that never lost a battle" or they referred to him as the "Big Man upstairs."

The writer wanted to have an experience that was more personal with God, to have the passion that the women expressed yet, he wanted a God that exemplified strength. Somehow the writer felt that God was both a God of relationship and a God of strength and power. All three elements relationship, strength, and power became the God which the writer wanted to know. The women seemed to understand God on the grounds

Called into ministry, the writer became a pastor. He founded the Living Church and became its pastor. As the church grew, once again, the writer noticed that men were not present and the question of men, absent from church, became a bigger question to be addressed. The absence of men in the church has never been acceptable to this writer as he knows that the God of all humanity loves all human kind. Once again the writer began to explore and talk with other pastors about the problem of men not being present in the church as women. There were not many answers given to the writer as he talked with other church leaders. Believing that God is the God of all humanity the writer remembered the demonstration of that in love in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”³

The Apostle John’s statement about God’s love was enough for the writer to seek out the whereabouts of men and why they were not as interested in church as were women. The writer knew that he had to seek answers as well as work toward finding some solutions to this dilemma in regards to the church.

³ John 3:16 The New Oxford Annotated Bible: NRSV.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

In recent years, many books have been written on building men's ministries. There are many men's ministry groups that have arisen in the latter part of the twentieth century which continued into the twentieth first century, such ministries as Promise Keepers,¹ Men of Integrity men's ministry and Man Power. "Promise Keepers" is a Christian evangelical ministry dedicated to uniting men to become 'godly influences' in the world. "Men of Integrity men's ministry"² is an interdenominational men's ministry dedicated to helping men be godly men. ManPower³ is a ministry dedicated to empowering men to go forth and become all that God has called them to be.

Ministries as those above have been birthed during the last several decades and are still growing. Books have been written by the hundreds and the interest of men's ministry is at an all time high, yet according to George Barna. "...there are about 70 million un-churched adults, then we estimate that roughly 38 million of them are men..."⁴ Barna describe un-churched as "...if he or she has not attended a Christian

¹ www.promisekeeper.org, accessed on (May 5, 2010).

² www.menofintegrity.org, accessed on (May 5, 2010).

³ www.T.D.Jakes.org, accessed on (May 5, 2010).

⁴ George Barna, *Grow Your Church From the Outside In* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books From Gospel Light, 2002), 42.

church service at any time during the past six months, other than special events such as wedding and funerals.”⁵ Hence, there appears to be a great number of men who are not being reached or connected to the faith community in any type of relationship.

Dr. Kunjufu contended that men need close relationships with other men. He stated in his book titled, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, “Men need close male friends with whom they can share their most intimate secrets, fears, desires, concerns, and goals. This trusted friend must be chosen with care.”⁶ Dr. Kunjufu suggested that men are seeking relationships but they are cautious to whom they put their trust. Men will only be open to relationships when they feel comfortable and it has to be on their own terms. Dr. Kunjufu also points out that the kind of church men would mostly return to or attend in large numbers would be churches that address the needs of men. It is important that the faith community understands the needs of men. There will be no relationship building until the faith community understands the plight of men. “When we know men’s needs, then we can begin to develop effective ministries.”⁷ Dr. Kunjufu believes that it is time to listen to men. He believes leaders of the faith community should prepare themselves to listen to what men have to say. He stated, “Good leaders are good listeners and good followers. They are attentive to the needs of men.”⁸ The researcher of this

⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁶ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2006), 64.

⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁸ Ibid., 88.

project agrees with Dr. Kunjufu and thought that creating a relationship with men by listening and participating with their agenda was an important component of the research project.

Credibility is pivotal in regard to leadership. Men like most humankind look for persons who are credible and it is because of credibility that trusted relationships can be formed. Kouzes and Posner said, “What we found in our investigation of admired leadership qualities is that more than anything, people want to follow leaders who are credible. Credibility is the foundation of leadership.”⁹ Credibility is more than a word, it is demonstrated in actions, actions that are lived out in the life of those who take on the responsibility to lead. Here are some of the common phrases people use to describe how they know credibility when they see it:

- “They practice what they preach.”
- “The walk the talk.”
- “They put their money where their mouth is.”
- “They follow through on their promises.”
- “They do what they say they will do.”¹⁰

Tom Rath and Barry Conchie in their book, *Strengthsfinder 2.0* said, “One of the leaders we interviewed said, ‘The truth is your bond – you die keeping your promises.’ If

⁹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posnes, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2007), 37.

¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

you send the message that your word is not worth much, you'll be paid back on that.”¹¹

Men want someone or something in which to trust in. Many of them see the church as a failure when it comes to trust. Men like all humankind want to believe in something that is trustworthy. Rath and Barry said, “At any level, whether you are a manager, CEO, or Head of state, trust might be the “do or die” foundation for leading.”¹² The church will be more attracted to men if the church adopts this approach when reaching men.

George Barna who is the director leader of the Barna Research Group stated, “Un-churched men are more likely to respond to a personal invitation than they are to surrender to pressure to belong to a group. They will be attracted via personal relationships more than media marketing.”¹³ Men like the personal direct approach according to Barna. Men are skeptical of too much religiosity and are not attracted to any event or programs that are not authentic in its appearance.

Men are unique in their thinking like all others of humanity. Therefore attracting this segment of God's creation will involve some creativity on the part of the faith community as the faith community works toward gaining the respect and trust of the un-churched men. The church must be connected enough to the outside world in order to know what will be effective in building or rebuilding this relationship with the un-churched. This idea of “connectedness” became a key component in the design of this project. Therefore the researcher and the research team members working with this

¹¹ Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, *StrengthsFinder 2.0: Strengths Based Leadership* (New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2008), 82.

¹² Ibid., 83.

¹³ George Barna, *Growing Your Church From The Outside In* (Ventura, CA: Regal Book From Gospel Light, 2002), 25.

project were careful to make sure they were relevant to the plight of the un-churched men. The researcher and the research team understood how important it was for the un-churched men to be in an atmosphere that was authentic to the beliefs of men.

This postmodern times that we are engaging brings with it something to be considered, the changing time bring new insights and new ideas that the church must begin to understand. The church must be open to the times. “Many postmodern Christians have a deep desire to reenter neighborhoods, towns, and cities as the people of God. The reentering is not done with a posture that would have us pointing fingers, however. It is a reentering in conversation, with a genuine interest in people and places all too often considered beyond our church walls and responsibility”.¹⁴ The postmodernism is producing a people who want to reason and have conversations. This is a great opportunity for the church at large to be open to listening instead of doing all the talking.

Leon Podles said in his book *The Church Impotent*, “Men and women not only act differently, they feel differently when it comes to religion.”¹⁵ The researcher as a pastor has often encountered the difference between men’s and the women’s reaction to religion. The researcher has observed that women appear to be more passionate and deeply concerned with the church and religion, men seem to be less passionate about the church and religion. To the researcher this means if men are to be a vital part of the faith

¹⁴ Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern and Wesleyan?: Exploring the Boundaries and Possibilities* (Kansas City, KS; Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 21.

¹⁵ Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas, TX; Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 13

community, the faith community must seek to understand these differences and work to bridge the gap.

George Barna observed that women tend:

- To assert strongly that the Bible is totally accurate in all its teachings;
- To affirm strongly the importance of religious faith in their life;
- To disagree strongly that Christ sinned while he was on earth;
- To choose an orthodox, biblical description of their God;
- To meet the criteria for born-again Christians;
- To agree strongly that the Bible can be taken literally;
- To believe that if a person does not consciously accept Christ as their Savior, he will be condemned to hell;
- To contend that the Bible teaches that “money is the root of all evil.”¹⁶

If the above is true, men must be approached in such a way that they will not be driven away by too much religious propaganda. Men’s being less religious does not mean that men are against religion but that men will have to be ministered to in a different manner. Finding the right avenue to reach men is the key to building or rebuilding a relationship that will allow men to respond to the faith community. This takes careful planning and procedure in order to attract men to the ministry of the faith community. While working with men, one will have to identify the cognitive thinking of the men. Men may appear less interested in religion or the faith community but if they are approached with the right tools the men will respond to the initiative that is being made

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

toward them. These tools need to target the interests of men such as, issues that men are facing in today's world. Men like all humankind can accept a church that is relevant. Care must be taken to find a way to attract men back to the community on a larger scale.

Kunjufu listed barriers to reaching men in his book title, *Adam Where are You? Why Most Black Men Don't Go to Church*. Dr. Kunjufu has twenty one reasons discussed among a men's group, which Kunjufu orchestrated, on why black men do not go to church. Even though Kunjufu did his research on black men, the same might be said of other men in society as well. Kunjufu's list is as follows:

1. Hypocrisy – Men say that there is not enough consistency in the life style of the so-called Christian, especially among the ministers.
2. Ego/Dictatorial – Men feel that the pastors are on an ego trip and they dislike the fact that they are told by the women in their life “the pastor said.” They feel that the pastors have too much authority in the church.
3. Faith-Submission – Trust-forgiveness-Angry at God – Men have a trust issue. They feel as if they have been dropped by the faith community, even to the point that they don't understand why God allows certain things to happen to them, especially early in their lives.
4. Passivity – Christians are too passive for them. They have problems with the “turn the other cheek” theology.
5. Tithing- The church asks for too much, while giving so little. Men state that the pastors are the best-dressed and drive the best cars. Men said that they work too hard for their money.

6. Irrelevance – Men see many problems in the community (African American especially) and the church is not addressing the issues.
7. Eurocentric – The church is too Eurocentristic; even Jesus Christ hangs on the church wall. African American men have problems with the image of Jesus being white.
8. Length of Service – Church is held too long. Men feel that there hours is just too much time to be in church.
9. Too Emotional – Church is too emotional the dancing in the spirit, the crying and the lifted hands etc. and men are not that way. They equate emotionalism with weakness. The men feel that emotionalism is not logical or rational.
10. Sports – Sunday is a good day to participate in sports especially during football season.
11. Attire/Dress Code – Men say they do not like to dress up and church expects them to wear shirts and ties.
12. Classism/Unemployment – The men say not only do they have to dress up but they need money to go to church if they want respect. They have no job as some do, they have no money for church. Staying home is the next best thing.
13. Education – Many of the men feel uncomfortable being in church because of the lack of education. They do not want to feel embarrassed (if not educated) if asked to read or do other things which required them to have some form of learning.
14. Sexuality and Drugs – Men feel that the church wants to control their private lives.

15. Homosexuality –They feel that too many homosexuals are in the church; therefore, they stay home and keep their sons home with them.
16. Spirituality/Worshipping Along/Universalism – Some men have problems distinguishing between being spiritual and being religious. These men said, “I believe in God. I don’t necessarily know what to call Him...but I don’t feel a need to go to church.”
17. Heaven – African American men feel that Heaven is a white man’s game to keep black people living on a hope and a promise.
18. Evangelism – Men were asked if they had ever been witnessed to and only one said yes, and others said they have been witnessed to but not by Christians.
19. Lack of Christian Role Models – Many men say neither their fathers nor grandfathers were church men, so they see no need to go to church.
20. Streets/Peer Pressure – Men feel that they get more respect from their street peers than from those in the faith community.
21. Parental Double Standards Forced With a Child- One third of the men say they were forced to go to church, while others state, their sisters had to go but they did not.¹⁷

The above reasons are to be taken seriously by church leaders in the twenty-first century. Upon examination, the writer interpreted the reasons above and the absence of men from the church as a trust and a relationship issue. Therefore, the researcher began to give much thought concerning relationship between the church and un-churched men.

¹⁷ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You? Why Most Black Men Don't Go to Church* (Chicago, IL: Images, 1994), 57-71.

Facts are Facts

Men do not go to church as do women. “Women go to church; men go to football games,”¹⁸ says Leon Podles in his book, *The Church Important: The Feminization of Christianity*. The church across the board is feeling the gender gap. At ABC NEWS.com¹⁹ Who Goes to Church? Survey reported:

Weekly Church Attendance

• All Men	3%
• All Women	44%
• Catholic Men	26%
• Catholic Women	49%
• Protestant Men	42%
• Protestant Women	50%

The above report reveals that men are not as likely to attend church services as are women. The report did not give reasons for the variation of attendance in church across the groups surveyed. In view of this literature, no answers were found to explain why men do not go to church. It just reported that men are not showing up to church as do the females counterparts. In view of this literature, we found no answers to why they do not go to church (as do the women). If men are not attending church as others, there are reasons that must be explored and the inquiry should lead to a solution to the problem.

¹⁸ Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 3.

¹⁹ [www.ABC New.com](http://www.ABCNew.com) accessed on (April 8, 2010)

Creswell said, “A literature review means locating and summarizing the studies about a topic. Often these are research studies, but they may also include conceptual articles or thought pieces that provide frameworks for thinking about topics.”²⁰ Research like the one above gave pieces of information and provides frameworks of thought. Those frameworks of thought helped direct the focus for the action research of this project.

One of the research studies reviewed was the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish life. It showed that in the 1990s women continued to participate in church life far more than men. Findings in this study include the following:

- More than 85% of those involved in ministry to the poor, sick and grieving are women and social justice and peace efforts drew heavily on women.
- More than 80% of Confraternity Christian Doctrine (CCD) teachers and sponsors of the catechumenate are women.
- More than 80% of the members of prayer groups are women.
- More than 75% of those involved in youth and recreational ministries are women.
- More than 75% of those who lead or take part in adult Bible study or religious discussions are women.
- Almost 60% of those involved in youth and recreational ministries are women.
- Fifty-two percent of parish council members are female.

²⁰ John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, VA: Sage Publications, 2009), 29.

- Fifty-eight percent of those identified as the most influential leaders in the thirty-six parish survey were women.²¹

Women are shown to be more active in all facets of the church life than men. The article did not detailed why men are less active than the females in the church life. This finding leads the researcher of this project on a deeper path to explore why men are not actively participating in the church. Therefore the researcher is drawn to explore how the church can build or rebuild relationships with men who are un-churched.

The church must come to grips with the idea that it must change if it is to attract men back into the church community. The church has to ask some serious questions about how the church can serve men so that the men can accept the service of the church and return back to the community.

Data from various denominations across the country indicate that the church is made up predominately of women. Therefore, with that being said, the survival of the church points to its female members. Women are more concerned and dedicated to the causes of the church. Women are going far beyond just attending church services; they are actually working in most ministries of the church. Researcher George Barna found women are:

- 100% more likely to be involved in discipleship.
- 57% more likely to participate in adult Sunday school.
- 56% more likely to hold a leadership position at a church (not including the role of pastor).

²¹ Jim Castelli and Joseph Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish: The Notre Dame Study of Parish Life Since Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 68-69.

- 54% more likely to participate in a small group.
- 46% more likely to disciple others.
- 39% more likely to have a devotional time or quiet time.
- 33% more likely to volunteer for church.
- 29% more likely to read the Bible.
- 29% more likely to attend church.
- 29% more likely to share faith with others.
- 23% more likely to donate to a church.
- 16% more like to pray.²²

Research continually suggests that men are lagging behind not only in church attendance but in the ministries of the church as well. Men are not finding an acceptable place for themselves within the church. Men's interest in the life of the church has been diminished. They are not committed to the church as their female counterparts. The church then must go on a journey to clear a path that will fill the gap that men will feel a need to be a part of the faith community once again.

David Murrow author of *Why Men Hate Going To Church* said, "If your vision of church is a place of comfort, safety, and loving affirmation, realize that your vision may be keeping men away. Pray and ask God to give you a bigger vision of what it means to follow Jesus—a vision that welcomes the risky, unpredictable, masculine spirit."²³ The church must explore new ways to bridge this gender gap. One of the elements missing is

²² Barna Research Online, "*Women are the Backbone of Christian Congregations in America*," 6 March 2000, www.barna.org, accessed 19 March 2010.

²³ David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 28.

relationship. Where there is no relationship there is no fellowship and growing together. The church is a place where all humanity is needed to build a community.

One final thought concerning a key factor to the church's agenda. If all of God's children are to be reached supervision must be in place. Supervision is oversight and care and the church has failed to have monitored itself with regard to reaching out to all people. Supervision is important to the church agenda, because it challenges the faith community to connect with those persons outside the community in new ways. It encourages openness because as Dr. Pohly stated, "Supervision is a conversation, meaning that the interaction involves all the persons present. It is not a time for supervisor to interrogate a supervisee as a judge questions a prisoner."²⁴ Conversations allow communication with all participants and can bring a better understanding of all involved. Supervision will allow the church to have conversations that are new and innovative, God created human kind to communicate and conversation is vital. Supervision will produce conversations that will in time supply the need that will channel the male population back into the community. These conversations will encourage men to talk about themselves and share their concerns which will allow the supervisor or church leader to better serve the need of men. These conversations are shared with all who participate in the process. Conversations allow people to share and grow together as they learn from each others.

²⁴ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of Supervision*, (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2001), 117.

Dr. Pohly also gives five definitions on supervision as follows:

* Supervision is pastoral: It is something that Christians do as part of their work whether they are judicatory officers, pastors, teachers, heads of departments, or church lay leaders. The giving and receiving of care is something in which all supervisory participants engage.

* Supervision is a way of doing ministry: Supervision is a way of doing ministry—a methodology, a style, for ministry. It provides a way for persons to engage in the same ministry as colleagues, as co-participants.

* Supervision is covenantal: It occurs within an agreement in which persons say to each other: this is what we will do together and for which we will hold one another accountable.

* Supervision is reflective: Supervision occurs within a supervisory conversation in which the participants reflect critically on their ministry. It is reflective in that the supervisors assist the supervisees in seeing themselves and their ministry more accurately, clearly, and creatively.

* Supervision is intentional: Although what happens in the supervisory conversation cannot and should not be programmed, it has intentionality. It is not haphazard or accidental; it has goals and occurs with regularity.²⁵

If the church is going to take the task of connecting with persons outside the faith community supervision has to be revisited with new lenses. The Pohly assessment on

²⁵ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Place: The Ministry Of Supervision* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publisher, 2001), 108.

supervision is very clear and important. There must be conversation between the church and those outside the church. Supervision is not a new idea, but for a long time has been a misunderstood and an over looked tool that is both needed and has theological roots.

Summary

The church is a community of the family of God. A community is dysfunctional when any part of humanity is missing. The faith community is made up of God's creation. Men's absence cannot be ignored but must be reckoned with as a missing link that needs to be rediscovered. This means that the church must become creative in the mission that God has given to the church to make disciples of all persons.

This creativity will be trial and error but the church must be the church and step outside the box and allow the Holy Spirit to be the guiding force. If the church is going to reach those outside the community of faith, communication must begin and the conversation must start. The leadership of the church must open up to new ways of doing God's business in order for the church to reclaim its position in the community at large.

Men are absent and the church is given the opportunity to supervise and create changes for all of God's people. It is time for the church to have conversations with men. These conversations will lead to openness to understand the need of men and the solution that will with the help of God, redirect men back toward the kingdom of God. The researcher along with his research team worked within the context of the Living Church

in McBee, South Carolina with a group of un-churched men in hopes of gaining knowledge on what would motivate men to consider a relationship with the faith community.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The researcher's purpose was to seek out answers to "how the church can connect with un-churched men to build a relationship between the two." What theology would better explain the plight of men and their absence and what would bring them back into a covenant relationship with the faith community? God's purpose from the beginning of time was for men and women to work together and love one another in the community. In the past several decades theologians have begun to give very serious concerns and thoughts about men in ministry and how they might be navigated back into the community of the church. The absence of men in the church is, without saying, a major problem that the church cannot ignore or deny. The absence of men has caused voices from the faith community to speak up and speak out. The matter of why the absence of men in the church has been answered by many authors and platforms. There are many books and conferences around the world which address the need for men's ministry. It appears that the Holy Spirit is breathing a fresh insight to the body of Christ concerning men and the faith community. The leaders in the family community are waking up to the fact that men are mislaid and now more than ever are the time to prepare the way for men to return.

Men as well as all of God's creation are very important in the mind of God and all of humankind are also co-creators with God; God has a plan for all of his creation.

Therefore to have men absent from the faith community leaves open an unintended deficiency that was not a part of the plan of God from the beginning of creation. In this chapter the researcher will seek to build a foundation on theological, biblical, and historical terms that will bring about a clearer understanding of the subject matter that the researcher has engaged.

The theological, biblical and historical foundations will support the discussions in which this project was designed. Human beings are created by God to be in a relationship with other human beings and this relationship is especially important to the faith community because we are all God's children. According to the book of Genesis chapter two, all of human kind is vital for the whole creation. Men have gone astray and their absence has gone unnoticed and ignored for many years. The church leaders and the faith community at large understand now, more than ever, that the continuation of the church as God had ordained it requires a closer look at men and their absence from the church.

There are many reasons given for this abandonment of men from church and the ministry of the church. The explanations given are ambiguous because there is so much to be considered. The church must now reflect on its own agenda. Are the questions raised about men being absent from the church valid, or is it just taken out of context? Is it just in America alone or is it a global problem? Do men just hate organized religion? The answer to all of these questions is no! David Murrow explains it this way:

Men's disinterest in Christianity is so consistent around the world; it can't be explained by pride, Father issues, sin, or distraction. Neither can we say, "We, men are just less religious," because this is untrue. Male and female participation are roughly equal in Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. In the Islamic world, men are publicly and unashamedly religious-often more so than women. Of the world's great religions only Christianity has a consistent,

nagging shortage of male practitioners. What is it about modern Christianity that is driving men away?¹

Men do not find the church abhorrent, but have fallen out of the church leaving behind much debate about their absence. The significance of the church has been a great influential structure for the survival of the family, the community, and the nation; therefore it is not acceptable for the community of faith to continue without reflecting on the plight of men and the church.

Theological Foundation

The Christian church has been facing for a long time the absence of men in the church. The church was given to human kind by God as a community where believers could come together and practice their faith and worship the Lord as one accord. The community of faith has an understanding of this community being God-centered for all human kind, but somehow has missed the mark on holding the entire community accountable for each other. God asked the question in Genesis 4:9 “The Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”² God is omniscient so even before he asked the question he knew the answer. The church has been given the opportunity by God now to be true to itself and give an answer to the old-age question.

We are indeed keeper of one another. This is where we, as God’s children are joined together in covenant and relationship. The question may arise, “what is a covenant?” According to Johnnie Godwin, a covenant is “mutual agreement between two

¹ David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*. (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2005), 8.

² All scripture used in this document will be taken from NRSV, unless otherwise stated.

persons or parties.” The covenant between God and people is unique because God alone sets the conditions. In a covenant between two people, the two negotiate the terms and promise with words or a written contract to keep the covenant.”³ Not only does the definition suggest covenant be kept between God and humankind, but also between humankind and humankind. God is a covenant God. No wonder he created humankind to be in covenant with each other. The covenant between the church and the un-churched has been broken. A covenant requires accountability and promises. Men are absent from the church and appear to have not been held accountable for their actions. In a covenant, accountability is a responsibility on both contracting parties.

Dr. Kenneth Pohly wrote in his book, *Transforming the Rough Places*, the following:

The Biblical roots of supervision are planted in the covenant concept of the Hebrew/Christian tradition. God’s covenant with Israel was one promise and response; God offered life to a People with a condition of accountability: “I will make of you a great nation...” (Gen. 12:2), and “you shall keep my covenant...” (Gen. 17:9). Made first with one person (Abraham), the covenant had as its object the well-being and mission of entire nation. Sealed originally with one act (circumcision), it came to be expressed in a complex discipline of observances. Yet, at its center was the simple relationship between God and a People expressed in the alternation of giving and receiving in worship and ethical action. Through the centuries oversight of the covenant was committed to a series of persons (charismatic leaders, priests, judges, kings) in a history of response characterized by both faithfulness and unfaithfulness. Life within the covenant became a pattern of brokenness and renewal to which Israel was periodically called to accountability—if not by rulers, then certainly by prophets: “The days are surely coming when I will make a new covenant...not...like the covenant which they broke...says the Lord” (Jer. 31:-32). Thus the story of Israel is the story of a covenantal relationship between

³ Johnnie Godwin, *The Student Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2000), 65.

God and a covenant community in which the supervisory task was one of maintaining accountability to the covenant.⁴

Dr. Pohly suggests that over the centuries the covenant was committed by a number of people, but in this case the church as a whole is charged to hold covenants. The church as supervisor had the task to oversee the covenant which was committed into its hands. The agreement in this facet is the care for all God's children and to focus on the promises and accountability of both parties. Men being absent and not being held accountable is a break of the covenant and the church as well as the un-churched have failed to keep the covenant. Therefore, when a covenant is broken relationships are lost. The church has a greater responsibility to attain those who have strayed from the community because the church has been appointed by God to be the caretaker of those who are in communion with the faith community.

Relationship is another vital element of bringing humankind into a mature connection with the faith community. God is a relational God and all through scripture there are instances of God's cooperating relationships; "I will be your God and you be my people." If God is a relational God, and the church is in relationship with God, then the church becomes relational to all that are connected and disconnected to the community. Our relationship with one another keeps us connected to the purpose of God. The church's concern then is to mend all who are broken, lost, misplaced and disconnected because the church is the caring branch of God's own chosen.

Dr. Pohly wrote, "It is that the new covenant makes possible a new relationship based on experience rather than knowledge. ... What is significant about it is that the people will participate in this relationship not primarily as something they know about

⁴ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry Of Supervision* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2001), 12-13.

from hear-say or someone's teaching, but as a result of their own encounter with God."⁵

The church's relationship with God is a direct indication of their relationship with each other. Dr. Pohly's statement, according to the researcher's understanding, is that people will participate in relationship because of their encounter with God. People in most cases have no problem believing "in God" or in the precept of God. Relationship is the way of the church. Therefore according to Paul, the apostle, the believers are known by other people on the basis of their written letters for all to read (2 Cor. 3:2). The church is not a secret club or a closed book but is open for all to experience. Those who are on the outside of the church need to understand who the church is and what the church does, therefore the Christians should live and act in such a way that will be inviting to all humankind.

The church's responsibility is to demonstrate the love of Christ for all humankind. The church is in relationship with God; the light of this relationship is constantly emanating from the church. It is this light that should be drawing men who are mislaid back into place. The church must reckon with itself concerning its call with God and his covenant with the relational community. If a relationship is faulted then the church must do its duty to fix or mend those relationships to be as Jesus has called them the "light of the world."

Dr. Jason E. Vickers reminds us in his book, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed*, that covenant theology is not new, nor does it have its holding with one group of people, Dr. Vickers wrote "...while covenantalism flourished among the Puritans, it was by no means exclusive to them. On the contrary, the language and logic of covenantalism could

⁵ Ibid., 144-145.

be found throughout late seventeenth- and eighteenth- century England.”⁶ The covenant theology has several facets. The church would do well to re-examine the covenant of grace in particular and be reminded of what God has done for us as God’s creation, and after examining the church then needs to be reminded of God’s grace and reach out to those who have strayed.

Karl Barth brings a new twist to the covenant theology. Barth said, “It is in reconciliation that the covenant truly reaches its goal and is not left pending. Since the covenant is a covenant of grace from the beginning, it can be fulfilled by reconciliation.”⁷ Karl Barth introduces the word reconciliation to the covenant theology. The simple meaning for reconcile, or reconciliation is “restored relationship.” If covenant is a covenant of grace men or any human beings who are absent from the faith community can be reconciled back to the community. In 2 Cor. 5:18-20 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” The apostle Paul is saying in the above scriptures that Christ’s death provided for the removal of the barrier of sin to bring people back into a right relationship with God, this means a renewed bond and it highlights the church’s role as ambassadors.

⁶ Jason E. Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2009), 84.

⁷ Eberhard Busch, *Barth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 43.

According to the scripture the church or faith community is an agent of reconciliation. The faith community should be open to reconciling any person back in relationship to the fellowship of the believers. Karl Barth further stated, "...God involves himself with humans despite sin."⁸ The researcher understands this statement by Barth as meaning that there are no barriers, not even sin can keep God from reaching out to God's creation which is lost or out of place. If God, who is our creator, will go to the length to be connected back to a misplaced people; the church has a responsibility to demonstrate God's love to anyone who has fallen or somehow gotten lost from the community of faith. Paul said that the church has been given this ministry of reconciliation. If this is the ministry of the church, then the church must be about its business by opening ways in which the church can do ministry to please God who performed the act of reconciliation by dying for the sins of lost creation.

It Takes Two to Make Changes

The church cannot stand alone on these issues of men straying from the church. The covenant is between both parties and it takes more than one to have a relationship. The Genesis 3:9 question ("Adam where are you") is as much alive today as it was when it was echoed over 6000 years ago in the garden called Eden. It was there that God placed Adam to reign and do God's will. In Genesis it states, "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there God put the man who he had formed."⁹ Eden was God –sanctuary for humankind. It was the place of delight and it was there that Adam

⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁹ Genesis 2:8

worshipped and enjoyed the fellowship he had with the creator. It was God's plan from the beginning for humankind to have fellowship and share a relationship that establishes peace with the creator.

Adam would worship God by being busy doing his duty as a worshipper and keeper of the "Eden Sanctuary." In Genesis 2:15, it states, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." God gave man and not only man, but all humankind something to do; humankind was not to sit by idle without a plan or a mission. God ordained humankind to be a workable worshipper. The atmosphere was prepared by God for man to be at the place of worship; man's worship consisted of working and dressing the garden and to have relationship and fellowship with God.

The church must become a church that looks like what Jesus expressed when Jesus made a declaration in Matthew 16:18, when speaking to Peter: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Jesus made it clear that the church is a powerful agent in the earth. The church, therefore, is a God-ordained place for humankind. The church, being the church, must also hold men accountable.

Men cannot escape this place called "Church" because it is a God-ordained place for men to be a part of a covenant relational place of fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ. This body of believers is alive and men need to be a part of something that is living. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it well, "The church, however, if it is truly to win over both the heart and the mind, must be alive."¹⁰ Men and women have different attractions. What might engage one may not engage the other; therefore, it is possible that the church

¹⁰ Paul Barz, *I Am Bonhoeffer: A Credible Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 46.

has not done enough in its ministering to men and the issues of men. This in fact could be a reason the church has failed in its appeal to men. Bonhoeffer speaks of the church being alive; the researcher understands “alive” as meaning sensitive in its ministries and the way these ministries are demonstrated for the betterment of all. Ministry can fail or succeed depending upon the ways in which supervision of the covenant is directed in the ministry. If supervision is misguided the result of the covenant will end in misunderstanding of that which were intended.

Therefore, the researcher agrees with Bonhoeffer; the church must be alive. In order to win the heart and the mind of the un-churched, the church must be alive to their needs. The church has become too institutionalized and has lost its life-giving power to draw men into it. The church is a place that gives life; that is why Jesus purchased it with his own life-giving blood. Acts 20:28 says, “...the church of God that God obtained with the blood of his own Son.” Life is in the blood and Jesus poured out his blood that humankind could live. Therefore, the church must offer the life of Jesus Christ through the Word and sacraments. The church must be active at all times as it seeks the understanding of ministering to the entire faith community, because it is a representative of the life of Jesus Christ in God.

The church cannot be passive at doing God’s work in the earth. It must be alive and innovative. Men need more than a worship service; they need to be challenged. That challenge can only come through a church that understands the needs of all its parishioners and works to the good of all. As it was in Wesley’s time, Wesley wanted a life-involved church where all could participate. It is said of Wesley, “Because of the intimate connection between theology and doxology, John Wesley was insistent that singing in

worship was to be done by the entire congregation. Wesley vehemently rejected for Methodist worship, the use of choirs and choral anthems—what was then the common practice in the Church of England.”¹¹

The church must be prepared to do what God has called it to do in order for there to be changes. The church belongs to the people of God, therefore because of the covenant made between God and the church and the church and the people, the church then must seek renewal for the task at hand. “Bonhoeffer was, however, certain that the church would indeed have to be renewed; it would have to become something different than before if it is to be a church again.”¹² Bonhoeffer saw that the church needed a makeover. There was weakness in the church and he saw that it needed to be renewed. Bonhoeffer spoke of this renewal as a “conversion”. There must be conversion, a turn, and a new church must emerge; a church whose God rather than hovering about it some faraway, hazy “beyond”- from which he can then be summoned as a kind of cure-all for human concern-instead, reigns as the lord of our entire life, the whole of life.”¹³ These words of Bonhoeffer, his thoughts concerning a church, should be energizing and give real life for the present moment. Bonhoeffer wanted to see a church that could be a life-giving agent now in this present world because the church that he was looking at was dead or slowly dying.

Bonhoeffer was right; the church must be alive and new life must be given to the church in order for it to live out its true meaning of the covenant that was given to them

¹¹ Randy L. Maddox, Jason E. Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 232.

¹² Paul Barz, *I am Bonhoeffer: A Credible Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 51.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

in order for men to be attracted and relationships can be built. Jesus said in Matthew 11:12, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent takes it by force.”¹⁴ The church cannot be weak or represent a weak gospel or a weak Christ. The church must be strong and powerful in order to carry out the mission that Jesus intended. Only a church that is filled with power based on the Word of God will be effective in attracting men to its doors. Jesus said to the disciples of John in Luke 7:22, “...Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.” The church can only be the church when it is active in the affairs of this world’s problems. Men, like all God’s children, need to be empowered with the spirit of action if they are to serve in the workings of the church.

Hebrew 10:25 says, “Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”¹⁵ The Bible has strongly encouraged that men as well as all humankind should be a part of the community of faith, this means that there should be a covenant relationship one with the other. The presence of men and humankind is vital. Since a large portion of men are absent from the church, the church should take action to combat the problem. This will take supervision and leadership. The researcher will return back to Pohly and the covenant, Dr. Pohly said, “The Biblical roots of supervision are planted in the covenant concept of the Hebrew/Christian tradition.” He used the scriptures from Genesis 12:2 and Genesis 17:9, both texts refer to conditions, accountability and relationship. Pohly also used New Testament texts found in 1 Cor. 12:25. “Paul used the imagery of human body

¹⁴ Matthew 11:12

¹⁵ Hebrew 10:25

to illustrate that all Christians are equal members of the body of Christ and that a variety of spiritual gifts have been give to them.”¹⁶ These gifts will spearhead the ministry of supervision.

Dr. Pohly said, “Supervision is a conversation, meaning that the interaction involves the entire person present. It is not a time for a supervisor to interrogate a supervisee as a judge questions a prisoner. It is a dialogue.”¹⁷ One of the first things is to get men to be in conversations. Dr. Pohly further stated, “Supervision provides a mirror for the supervisee to reflect on the situation and see it in all of its dimensions from a new perspective, not in a passive way but as a means to making responsible decisions about self and ministry.”¹⁸ Supervision helps dialogue with men about their absence from the church and also engaged them in new ideas that will challenge them to consider ways that they can transition back in the faith community (the church). Understanding covenant and covenant relationship building will be a very strong tool for the ultimate transition of un-churched men back into the community.

If the faith community is serious about encouraging men back into the church and building relationships, then there must be some dialogue in the faith community about the covenant that is between God and humankind and then humankind with each other. There must be conversations about the church’s responsibilities to those who are outside of the community. The church must talk about covenanting with each other to build or rebuild

¹⁶ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of Supervision* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2001), 12.

¹⁷ Ibid., 117.

¹⁸ Ibid., 117.

relationship, after all God's covenant with humankind is to be with one another and with God.

The supervision and leadership efforts will began with the church. In order for men to return there must be conversations that will prepare the church to receive those who will return. Leadership teams must be in place and the leaders of the faith community must be able to guide. "Those in positions of leadership need to stop functioning as trained servers and start functioning as equipped leaders."¹⁹ Supervision lead the conversation for leadership to take place as the writer and the leadership team of The Living Church in the Lord Jesus Christ, prepared model of supervision and leadership for the "Return of Adam," as they strived to build relationships with un-churched men. Conversations which were supervised encouraged the entire team to be focused on the purpose of the ministry of building relationships.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

For the Christian, the Bible is the foremost authority on every subject that is related to humanity, the world, and God. Therefore, the Bible becomes the roadmap which leads to an understanding of events and occurrences that are taking place in the world as we study and interpret texts for answers to questions asked. Tiffany and Ringe suggest "...it is clear that people read the Bible to seek answers to questions—both questions about life's situations the readers, and questions about the text itself."²⁰

¹⁹ Don Cousins *Experiencing Leadership: Letting Go of Leadership Heresies* (Colorado Springs, CO: David c. C. Cook, 2008), 41.

²⁰ Frederick Tiffany and Sharon Ringe, *Biblical interpretation: A Road Map* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 17.

The Bible has gone through many battles and has been tested and tried, yet the Bible remains intact, loved and trusted by many hundreds of thousands around the globe. It is trusted as God's Word.

The Bible speaks explicitly in St. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that ever who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." It is here in John's Gospel that the love of God is expressed in a profound way. God's love for men and all humankind was so great that Jesus Christ gave his life. This text tells us three great things: the initiative in all salvation lies with God; the mainspring of God's being is love; the width of the love of God. This love is the challenge of the church, and the faith community, that men must be accounted for because they are missing from the faith community. God's love for all humankind is great, the scripture said in Romans 5:8, "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." God gave his best that humankind of all races and genders would have a life in Christ. God's sacrifice reveals his covenant love for all persons. The work of Christ dying on the cross was to bring redemption to all humanity.

Covenant is biblical and is rooted throughout scripture texts. The essence of Covenant is to be found in a particular kind of relationship between persons. Mutual obligations characterize that kind of relationship. Thus a covenant relationship is not merely a mutual acquaintance but a commitment to responsibility and action. A key word in Scripture to describe that commitment is "faithfulness," acted out in a context of abiding friendship."²¹ The faith community is a covenant people; therefore, is charged to keep covenant with all of God's children.

²¹ Etwell, Walter A. Baker *Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 530.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden. God created a place that would be an atmosphere of holy relationship and purpose. The placement of Adam and Eve in the garden was designed and to be founded in relationship with each other and with God, who designed the garden (Genesis 2:15-24). God did not leave Adam in the garden alone; God said it was not a good thing for man to be alone. God did not create human beings to dwell alone but to live in rapport. In Genesis 2:18 the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." When God created humanity God had relationship in mind; this is the first form of the covenant tradition. Adam and Eve were to live in the garden and form community. It is stated in Genesis 1:27-28, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over everything that moves upon the earth." It was not in the mind of God for human beings to be apart from each other. The Genesis 1:27-28 text stresses the creation of humanity as simultaneously male and female. This leads to the emphasis in the blessing of v. 28 and the book of Genesis as a whole on the multiplication of humanity in general."²² God is interested in community and relationship for all of humanity. They were covenanted together to create community and live in an environment that would be suitable for all.

As we search through the Bible we find relationships being formed and being broken. Adam and Eve seemed to be placed in a perfect environment where they could

²² *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*: Third Edition. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2001), 12.

build a great relationship and be in a community that was God based and family oriented. Yet, there came an interruption in the original plan and the community was interrupted and a break down in the covenant was formed.

This interruption came in the form of what is called the “fall of man” (humanity). This divine relationship was broken and Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden. Genesis chapter 3:1-8 is a short periscope which describes and outlines the fall of humanity which put humankind outside of the original plans of God to build relationships and a godly community.

Genesis 3: 1 “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’? The scripture describe the cause of the interruption of the covenant and relationship; a tempter approached the human beings in the garden from among the animal kingdom and the human beings yield to the temptation and broke the command of God. In the Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. 1, the following is written:

The serpent is said to have been the tempter. But to anyone who reads the narrative carefully in connection with the previous history of the creation, and bears in mind that man is there described as exalted far above all the rest of the animal world not only by the fact of his having been created in the image of God and invested with dominion over all the creature of the earth, but also because God breathed into him the breath of life, and no help meet for him was found among the beasts of the field, and also that this superiority was manifest in the Gift of speech, which enabled him to give names to all the rest--a thing which they, as speechless, were unable to perform, it must be at once apparent that it was not from the serpent, as a sagacious and crafty animal, that the temptation proceeded, but that the serpent was simply the tool of that evil spirit, who is met with in the further course of the world history under the name of Satan.²³

²³ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 57.

Humankind was tempted, tricked by an insider, and was used as a tool to destroy that which God had planned in the beginning for humankind. The commentary gives us a casement to look through and view that there are evil forces that have and can separate the intended purpose of humankind. In Genesis 3:2-7 the interruption took place when humanity yielded to tempter and the community was in trouble and now humanity had to face something new to them called “sin”.

God created humankind to live at peace with themselves and the world around them. God granted them the freedom of free-will. Humanity was given the ability to live in a community with other people for the betterment of all. Paul Tillich said of Augustine, “Augustine held that the first man, Adam, had the freedom not to fall, not to die, not to turn away from the good. In this state he was at peace with himself, a profound remark in view of our modern depth psychology; he was at peace with all things and all men.”²⁴ If Augustine is correct man gives up something far greater than himself, he gives up his place and peace in the community in which God had created for humankind to live and be in relationship.

Adam and Eve both ate the forbidden fruit, causing a major shift in the relationship between God and humanity and even themselves. The tempter’s words were not true and humanity yielded. The order of the garden has changed because the covenant was broken; now humanity was trying to hide from God. They tried to hide themselves, but the “sin” had been committed. The relationship between God and humanity was once pleasant has now brought fear to hearts of his creation.

²⁴ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 126.

It would appear that humanity was lost forever; they had disobeyed the call of God on humanity's life. The community was disengaged and the relationship between God and humanity was broken. God appeared once again to save humankind from self-destruction.

“Adam Where Art Thou”

In Genesis 3:8-9, “They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

Adam and Eve heard God's voice in the garden and tried to hide from the presence of God. The Interpreter commentary reads, “The instinctive reaction to guilt is to hide, to cover one's nakedness, to exculpate oneself. But the gulf of separation cannot be concealed, and the consequences of this alienation are inescapable.”²⁵ Humanity's sins or guilt can cause humankind to try and hide out from God. According to the above text there is something in humankind that causes them to hide from their Creator when the relationship has been broken. When humanity finds itself out of place with God that is when humanity tries to devise a way out.

God is a covenant God, a God of relationship and community oriented. Therefore because of the investment that God had placed upon humankind, God's grace is revealed in verse nine, God called out to humankind, “But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” God sought humanity, not humanity seeking God. It is

²⁵ *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Vol. 63.

always the same pattern, Romans 3:11. God sought Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. “You have not chosen me, I have chosen you,” John 15:16.

Humanity was crafted into a masterpiece by the master designer. Humankind was busy in the plan of God. Genesis stated, “that in the beginning of creation, humankind was created to be a worker of God’s purpose.” Humanity was given dominion over the earth and was told to subdue it. Can humankind function outside of its God-given ability or purpose? Humankind can only do the things God created them to do in the perimeter in which God created humankind to blossom and grow. If humankind is removed and is not allowed to function, humankind will then become something else other than what God intended; and their attention and focus will deviate from the original purpose.

The Sovereign God was concerned about the whereabouts of Adam ²⁶(humanity), not because God did not know, but because God loved his creation. In Genesis 3:9, “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” Adam was out of place. He was in the garden, but still outside the place of his divine purpose. Adam’s attention was no longer on the things which he was created to be. He needed to be sought out. In this case, as already been stated, it was God seeking Adam out. “God took the first step toward saving sinners, seeking the person confused by shame and calling out, “Where are you?”²⁷ There is an indication of Adam being outside. God is not asking the question because God could not see Adam, but God wanted Adam to see himself. “The question does not mean that Adam and Eve had managed to hide themselves in a place

²⁶When the researcher use the name “Adam” he is speaking of all humankind.

²⁷ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary: A One Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 16.

where God could not see them. Rather, it indicates that God wanted them to be brought out.”²⁸

Adam was out of place with his calling and God wanted him back in place. Adam was no longer in the will of God and it was from Adam’s fallen state of sin that he answered God. Adam was absent from God’s presence. The Sovereign God made the call, and Adam answered the call, “I hid myself.” Are men hiding? If so how do we find them? And what are they hiding from?

A Promise to Reclaim Humanity

Reconciliation

Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” In speaking to the serpent, God made a promise of ultimate victory for humanity. The promise of Genesis 3:15 not only gave the hope of a redeemer who would contend with Satan and overcome him, but also implied that he would be placing perpetual enmity between the opposing seeds in the world.

This promise was fulfilled when God sent Jesus into the world to die for the sins of humanity. Jesus’ death would bring reconciliation between God and his creation. It was through Jesus coming to the earth and dying on the cross that man would be restored back in good standing with God. What humanity lost in the fall; would be regained in the death of Jesus Christ. New life would be given and a new relationship formed.

²⁸ Ibid., 17.

Man was indeed a “lost cause” so it seemed, but God who is a covenant keeper and a God who values relationship sent Jesus into the world to reconcile humankind back to himself and to each other. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” Romans 5:8 says, “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” Laymon explains that, “God’s love is not pious fancy. There is concrete evidence of it in what Christ did, in his devotions to men without scrutinizing their merit. Human experience provides no parallel to what Christ has done for men, even for the ungodly.”²⁹

God’s love for fallen humanity was greater than the sin that humankind had committed. God gives his best to bring humankind back into place. 2 Cor. 5:18-19, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”

The theological term reconciliation means “to bring into harmony.” In this passage Paul argued that the death of Jesus brought humanity to a place of harmony with God; where forgiveness can flow. But there is also an experiential dimension to reconciliation. “We are to live in harmony with God, reflecting in ourselves the righteousness of God. It is to this end that Paul ministered—and in this passage he shows

²⁹ Charles M. Laymon, *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary On The Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 778.

us the key to a ministry of reconciliation of our own.”³⁰ The church has been given this same ministry of reconciliation to bring humanity back in place with the community. This ministry of reconciliation according to Paul’s writing is what the message of the faith community should be about when trying to connect with the un-churched to build or rebuild relationships.

God is on a constant move to bring humanity back to their rightful place with their creator. God proved his love and relationship with fallen humanity by the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. Humankind was fallen but God’s love was greater and lift up to a new life with God through Christ Jesus.

Example of Relationship Building and Reconciliation

To be in covenant, means that one is in a relationship. There are times when relationships are lost or broken, therefore someone gets left out or misplaced. Reconciliation is bringing together in unity. The church is an agent of reconciliation. Men are missing and we have the responsibility to respond to the absence of them. Below is a family of brokenness, the church is also a family of brokenness that needs to be reconciled with some missing links, in this case the missing links are men. The story of Joseph reveals that there are many reasons for separation and alienation from the community. The story addresses the pain, suffering, and despair that brokenness causes. The utterance desired is to build or rebuild relationships with the family.

³⁰Richards, Larry and Lawrence O. Richards *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1987, S. 880.

The church is a family and the family has issues that can lead to a distorted or destroyed relationship. The church is called to bring broken pieces back together. This process requires covenant and relationship building. The importance of the survival of the community is to understand and come to grips with the issues at hand. God has called the faith community to be reconciled with those who are considered outside.

The book of Genesis and in the chapter 37 is a family story about Joseph and his family. “The historical period in which the Joseph’s story is set is difficult to determine. Details about Egypt are accurate, but give no indication of a probable date.”³¹ Genesis, Chapter 37, is the beginning of the history of Joseph. The brothers made it clear that Joseph was out of the group. After a time, Joseph’s family began to function without him; they continued to live their life as if Joseph never existed. There is nothing in the biblical text to suggest that the life of Joseph’s family did not change because of his absence, but that his father grieved sorely over the disappearance of Joseph. The text did not suggest that his brothers, knowing that Joseph was still alive, sought to find him.

Genesis 37, verses 1-11, Joseph dreams of power. According to Cogan within these verses, three reasons are found as to why his brothers hated him. In verse two, “... Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.”³² In verse four “... his brother’s saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.”³³ Finally, in verses 5-10 Joseph dreamed dreams, and in verse 11 reveals internal trouble in the family as a result of Joseph’s dreams. “So his brothers were

³¹ Charles M. Laymon, *The interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary On The Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 26

³² Mordecha Cogan; *The Anchor Bible*: (New York, NY:Randon House Inc., 1989).

³³ Ibid.

jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.”³⁴ It is on these premises that the writer would like to build his case that Joseph’s brothers decided that Joseph would be considered an outsider. There was a lack of understanding of the call of Joseph to do God’s future proposition for the welfare of the family as well as the nation.

The understanding of Joseph’s call placed a wedge between Joseph and his siblings. Joseph’s call depended on Joseph being able to hear God, the One who called. His brothers did not understand the call. According to James D. Berkley, “A call, on the other hand, has no maps, no itinerary to follow, and no destination to envision; rather, a call depends upon hearing a voice. The organ of faith is the ear, not the eye. First and last, it is something one listens for. Everything depends upon the relationship of the listener to the One who calls.”³⁵ Joseph heard the call and the caller but his brothers were oblivious to the call. To do God’s Will was Joseph’s intentions, but his brothers were not in tune to Joseph’s purpose in the plan of God. This lack of understanding came between Joseph’s relationship with his family and Joseph became an outsider.

Joseph was born into this family, but because of the lack of his brothers’ ability to deal with Joseph’s call and status, Joseph was placed outside of the family as the family continued to move on without him. Men, like all other human beings, were (are) called to be a part of the family of God, but men are missing and there seems to be a lack of the call of God upon them; therefore, the family (the church) continues to function even though men are absent from the arena of the church.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ James D. Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Management & Administration* (Grand, Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 39.

Genesis 37, verses 3-4 denotes that Joseph is apparently the younger brother.

Verse 3 said, "... because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves." Joseph's brothers now had to deal with a brother who was younger and needed special attention because of who he was. Joseph was favored because he was the son of his father's old age. Joseph received a special gift that none of his other brothers had ever received: a robe. The gift of the robe represented status. "The gift is a symbol of Joseph's privileged status and probably indicated that he stands above the necessity of manual labor. Laborers wore shorter garments to free their arms and legs."³⁶

The brothers of Joseph were not able to identify with him because he was gifted with a call of God upon his life. It was apparent to them that Joseph would require more from them than they were willing to give. They were not willing to follow the path that Joseph was taking. Joseph was following the call of God upon his life; therefore, his brothers lost sight of who he was and what he meant to the community and the family. It would be easier to put Joseph out of the community and let the community continue without any distractions that Joseph would cause. Joseph is no longer welcomed and his place in the family is being threatened by his position as reporter and supervisor. Franzmann, in his commentary of Genesis 37:3, points out that Joseph's long robe with sleeves was a mark of distinction. Jacob, Joseph's father, did not know that this distinction would eventually cause Joseph to be an outsider.

Joseph was a dreamer and a visionary. Verses 5-9 tell of his dreams, "When Joseph spoke of or reported his dreams, it provoked his brothers to be jealous of him and even his father, Jacob, rebuked him, though Jacob kept the matter in his heart." Once

³⁶ Charles M. Laymon, *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary On The Bible* (Nashville, TN:Abingdon Press, 1971).

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

Joseph's dreams were of power and authority for the future. Joseph's brothers were not in position nor were they willing to accept that Joseph had been gifted with a divine call. Instead of embracing and nurturing Joseph, they took the easy way out by getting him out of the community and the family. Men have been misunderstood by the way in which they have perceived things and the church has allowed this misunderstanding to push men aside.

In verses 12-36, Joseph was transferred to Egypt. Jacob, Joseph's father, seemed not to understand or know the extent of the hostility that Joseph's brothers had toward him because he sent Joseph directly into the path of harm. The attitude of Joseph's brothers appeared to suggest that their life would be less complicated without Joseph being around. Joseph's life represented authority and obedience, not only to God, but to his father Jacob. Joseph walked in the commandments of his father; therefore, his brothers saw him as a "father's boy".

A deeper look at the events of Joseph's story will reveal that Joseph was an instrument that his father used to keep up with his brother's doings. Joseph's job as reporter did not give him any favor with the rest of his family. No doubt Joseph was instructed to keep his father informed of the behavior of his brothers (12-14). They in turn resented the supervision which Joseph represented and in return hated him for it; refusing even to bid him welcome with the customary greeting: "Peace be with you."³⁷

It was not Joseph's intention to be special or to take the leading role in family; it was God who put the dreams in Joseph's heart and mind. "Neither of the dreams were

³⁷ Roehrs Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary, An Authoritative In-Home Resource For Students of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Concordian Publishing, 1979), 123.

the product of Joseph's egotistical thinking. Both were visions of the future, foretelling what was in store for him and his brothers."³⁸ Men as well as women are always dreaming and God is the One who made dreaming a part of life, and when one can no longer dream, one will no longer exist as created to be. Joseph's brothers over-looked the ability of one to dream, and instead of building upon the dreams and drawing from them, they allowed themselves to attempt to destroy the dreams by making Joseph an outsider.

Joseph's desire was to carry out the job that his father gave him, but this desire was to meet with all kinds of problems and oppositions for him. His brothers did not take well being spied on. Genesis 37:18 implies, "Joseph's persistent efforts to carry out his father's will and his complete lack of apprehension were in sharp contrast with the murderous designs of his brothers."³⁹

Genesis chapter 45 brings an end to a broken family. Genesis 45:1-28, Joseph made himself known to his brothers and father. Verses 1-3: "The brothers initially reacted with shock to the knowledge that they face the brother whom they sold into slavery. 4-13: Joseph reassures his brother by telling them that God, not they, sent him into slavery. God sent him there so that he might feed his family in the famine."⁴⁰

Joseph's story is one of misunderstanding of the call and the mandate that was upon Joseph's life. His family was not receptive to his particular call and became distant and disenfranchised him. So instead of embracing him and his dreams, Joseph was ostracized. Misunderstanding and jealousy from his brothers lead to Joseph's

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, (New York, NY, Oxford University, 2001), 72.

enslavement and a separation from his family into a culture that he was not accustomed to; even though God had greater plans for his life. Although Joseph was put out by his family, God on the other hand never left him. God was faithful to bringing him into leadership. Joseph was put out by his family and for a season, had to live as a stranger to no fault of his own. Even though Joseph was excommunicated from his family and they continued with their own agendas as if Joseph never existed; the story of Joseph ends with a reuniting of the family. The scriptures state in 2 Corinthians 5:18 -19 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”⁴¹

The researcher believes that as Joseph was outside the family because of many misunderstandings, there are those in the church who have lost fellowship and need to be reunited to bring the purpose of the kingdom. The researcher wishes to reunite with un-churched men by building or rebuilding relationships. The next text that will be discussed is from a different origin and perspective. There are many ways in which one can be outside the family of God.

Lost and Found

Reconciliation and Relationship

Luke Chapter 15

Chapter 15 of Luke’s gospel contains three parables and links them to why Jesus associates with sinners. The thought is that Jesus came to save that which is lost or

⁴¹ 2 Cor. 5:18-19 NIV, The Leadership Bible.

misplaced. Luke in the 15th chapter is about reclaiming and reconciling to that which is lost. The thought the researcher of this project deems from the Scriptures is covenant and relationship building. “The linkage is evident in the terms lost and found (vv. 6, 9, 24, 32) and rejoice and celebrate (vv. 6, 9, 24, 32; Stein 1992:400). All three parables end with similar statements (vv. 7, 10, 32. The theme of Jesus’ association with sinners is key.”⁴²

While all three parables of Luke chapter 15 shows important framework for the project of the researcher. The researcher will place attention on the vv. 11-32 dealing with the lost son, are as some might label this pericope “the prodigal son”. The parable of the lost son is about a relationship being lost and a void in the community because of the missing link.

The most important fact that the researcher understands is the father’s willingness to forgive the misguided son and bring him back into full relationship with the community (the family). This is important to this project finding ways to reconcile and build or rebuild relationships with the lost. As this parable is viewed, the father is given more attention than the son. The father’s willingness to forgive and reunite the family regardless of the past reason for the son’s absence shows the compassion of a father and the importance of relationship.

Luke 15:11-12, “Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that belong to me.’ So he divided this property between them.” The text does not say why the son wanted to leave home; it just began by saying that the son requested to have his share that he thought should be his. “He wants his portion of what his father’s life will leave him. In

⁴² Darrell Bock L. *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1994), 256.

a Jewish context the younger brother would receive half of what his elder brother received.⁴³ The father granted the son's request and the son separated himself from the family and left a void in the community.

Luke 15:13-15, "A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything he had a severe famine took place throughout that country and he began to be in need. So he hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs." "Having divided the living or the property between the two sons, the father watches the younger son depart. On his own doing, the son loses everything in wild living."⁴⁴ The author of the text did not explain any other reasons for the boy wasting his living, only he said by "wild living." The son was out of the community and he scatters (*diaskorpizo*) his resources: "he squandered his inheritance and throws his money away. Following his financial failure brings natural disaster. Famine strikes the land and he is in need."⁴⁵ The son is lost and is outside the providence of his father's protection. He is working a job that is beneath any Jewish person, which is feeding pigs.

Luke 15:16 reports, "He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything." The son on his own was still in trouble being outside the community of the family. Though he had a job, his life was in disarray, vv.17-19 "But when he came to himself", he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands

⁴³ Ibid., 259.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 259.

have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son, treat me like one of your hired hands.” At this point in the prodigal son story, he had to do some serious reflections. Dr. Pohly spoke of supervision and said it is reflective. “While there are identifiable stages through which such a conversation normally flows, the objective is to help people tell and confront their own life story in ministry as a way of making appropriate faith (action) response.”⁴⁶ The writer of Luke said the son gave reflection of his life and journey. For the son, this was a turning point in his journey to return to the family.

“The son reflects on his condition and realizes that his father’s servants have it far better. The sinner discovers his desperate situation because of sin. To be outside of God’s family is to be utterly alone.”⁴⁷ The son’s reflection leads to a plan, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.” The son’s reflection expresses the heart of a lost person communicating with the one who is able to help.

Luke 15:20, “So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.” The son came home, the father reacted in a manner of reconciliation, and the father opened himself to the lost son. “The son proceeds with his confession, but the father interrupts. The son is satisfied to be a slave, but the father will restore him to

⁴⁶ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of Supervision* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2001), 108.

⁴⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InTerVarsity Press, 1994), 259.

full son ship.”⁴⁸ Reconciliation is a key factor in this story. The researcher is aiming for this same kind of reconciliation for this project.

Luke 15:22-24 “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe the best one and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.” “The note of joy about the son’s return is crucial in the passage, as is the father’s restoration of son ship privileges. The son has come from destitution to complete restoration. That is what God’s grace does for a penitent sinner.”⁴⁹

The church must prepare itself for restoration and celebration. Celebrating is about welcoming the lost or misplaced ones back into the community. The church must be reminded of the covenant and work to engage reconciliation so that community can be rebuilt.

Luke 15:25-32 reveals an elder brother who did not leave the community and is now having some negative feelings about the son who has returned. The father had to stand in the gap and remind the elder son of community and reconciliation. The church must be reminded that there are some lost persons who, on their return, will need and understand reconciliation and covenant. The church has been charged to receive and restore the lost and misguided. This is the church’s responsibility as God’s community on the earth.

The researcher sees great need for relationship building and believes that covenant and reconciliation are two key factors in building relationships with the un-

⁴⁸ Ibid., 260.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

church. The above story of the prodigal son reveals the importance of community. The community must be prepared to receive those who are on the outside. Building relationships is a work of art and must be understood as God and humankind working together to bridge gaps between the church and the un-churched.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Why is the absence of men in the church so prevalent and what has happened to the community and relationship? These are questions that are forcing the church leaders and church organizers to re-examine the fate of the church. Men are no longer the majority in the Christian church; in many ways men have abandoned ship which leaves women and children at the helm of the ship (church). Men are a key component in the role of Christian ministry and the church, yet there is a lack of men in the church. There are many questions to be asked, such as: Where are the men during the eleven o'clock hour on Sunday, and not only on Sunday, but church on any given day? Is the lack of men in the church a culture, denominational, or racial issue? What has pushed men away from the church? Where are men when the church is in crisis?

The twenty-first century has arrived and is facing the same dilemmas concerning men being absent from the church as in previous places and times. A critical look at this trend will show that there are problems and reasons for the absence of men in the church. It is not by chance that men are not interested in the Christian church; for every problem has a reason behind it and answers to be sought out. The church must explore the problems and offer solutions to the faith community at large.

The Christian church has traditionally been viewed as oppressive to women and a healthy place for men. As one takes a closer look at the church, it is the men who have abandoned the church while the presence of women has increased. *Vision Magazine* reported that The International Congregational Life Survey (ICLS) has a very interesting finding. It found that while women may be seen in church fairly regularly and in respectable numbers, men are a much rarer commodity. Despite the claims of biblical patriarchy, men are not in place. According to *Vision*, a Christian magazine, in a fall issue of 2005 states, "...a recent survey reports that men have all but abandoned the churches of America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand."⁵⁰

In the Western world, men are missing in action when it comes to their active duty in the church. From the smallest places of worship to the largest cathedrals men are in the minority. The absence of men in the church is not a new phenomenon. History will reveal that men have in many ways deserted the church. The church has become a place for women and children. Many men who are in church are there because of a wife or a girlfriend. "The strategy of American revivalists in the Second Great Awakening in the 1830s was to approach men through their wives."⁵¹ The church fathers understood that in order to get the men in church, they had to do so by engaging the women as a tool of evangelism. Therefore, the church fathers made great efforts to implore the women as witnessing tools that would be used to bring their husband, sons, and brothers into the church. Barbara Epstein, in her reading on conversion accounts written during the revivals of the early nineteenth century, concludes, "...that women converted because of

⁵⁰ *Vision Christian Magazine*; Social Issues: Are Men Anti-Church, Fall 2005 Issue.

⁵¹ Leon J. Poodles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 3.

spiritual conflicts, but frequently, it was social pressure, especially from women, rather than the need to resolve internal conflicts, that drove men to convert.”⁵²

In the United States, the nation began to change, especially around 1830-1930, from being a predominated agricultural nation, to a more industrial and commercial nation. As this shift happened, men began to distance themselves from the church. Evelyn A. Kirkley writes of the Freethinking movement in the 1880s that, “...men constituted 70-80% of this movement ...to Freethinkers, that 70-80% of church members were women while the same percentage of atheists were men clearly, demonstrated men’s superior reasoning and intellectual capabilities.”⁵³ For a large portion of men, the church was no longer viewed as a place for men of intelligence, but was a place for women and children. Church was becoming more and more a place for women as men retreated to other forms of lifestyles.

As the nineteenth century continued, women outnumbered the men in church over the general population by a large margin; this was also seen in the Second Great Awakening. In 1833 the Universalist, Sebastian Streeter claimed that “Christian churches are composed of a great disproportion of females.”⁵⁴ These same attitudes continue to be the outlook of the church. As the nineteenth century went on, the church seemed to be viewed by men as a woman’s place; therefore, fewer men were engaging in the church experience. “The nineteenth century minister moved in a world of women. He preached mainly to women, administered sacraments largely for women, and worked not

⁵² Barbara Epstein. *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance In Nineteenth-Century America*. (Middletown; CT. Wesleyan University Press. 1981), 158.

⁵³ Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark Muesse. *The Making of Masculinities: the New Men’s Studies*. (Boston, MA, 1996), 43.

⁵⁴ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*. (New York, NY: Alfred E. Knopf, 1977), quoting F. D. Huntington, *Sermons for the People* (Boston, 1856), 350.

only for them, but with them in mission and charity work of all kind.”⁵⁵ History continually repeats itself because men are still absent from the church.

It is fair to say that as time continues, the same cycle of the absence of men is felt in the arena of Christianity. Even during the Post-Civil War, the church was viewed as a woman’s institution by one observer in the evangelical South, “the altars of our churches are pitiably devoid of young men ... there has scarce been a religious young man here in years ... and there are but few married men who attend services at any of our churches.”⁵⁶ Charles Grandison Finney, who preached in the Second Great Awakening, found a church that was female. He stated that, “Women composed the great majority of members in all churches.” He further stated, “...women dominated revivals and praying circles, pressing husbands and sons toward conversion, and facilitating every move of the evangelist.”

The church has arrived in the twenty-first century and the church is still on a downward spiral when it comes to men in attendance of the church. Even though men are still at the top of the ladder of the church in leadership positions, it is the women who are holding it up. One can visit the church on any given day and will discover that women are in place, keeping the church alive and vibrant. “Visit the church during the week, and you’ll find most of the people working there are female. Drop in on a committee meeting and you’ll find a majority of the volunteers are women, unless it’s that small bastion of males present on the building committee. Look over the leadership roster: the pastor is likely to be a man, but at least two-thirds of the ministry leaders will

⁵⁵ Ibid., 100.

⁵⁶ Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South 1965-1920*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 122.

be women.”⁵⁷ Murrow, in his book titled, *Why Do Men Hate Church*, said, “Examine the sign-up sheets for volunteer work, prayer, Sunday school, and nursery duty. You’ll be lucky to see more than a couple of men’s names on these lists.” Men are absent, and there are more women present in the church today than were seen in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. As Murrow said in his book, “with so much female presence and participation, the church has gained a reputation as a ladies’ club in the minds of men.”

The problem with men absent in church has drawn the attention of scholars and church leaders. Jawanza Kunjufu, a lecturer and educator, has built a ministry around the African-American community, particularly African-American men. He is looked to by many as an expert on the black male. He wrote a book entitled, *Adam! Where Are You? Why Most Black Men Don’t Go to Church* 1994. Kunjufu’s findings flow with the same views as the writers of history: the church is looked on by men as a place for women. Kunjufu found that African-American men see religion as being for women; they see it as being too passive, too soft, and too emotional. Leon Podles, in his book, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*, agrees with Kunjufu. Podles said, “Contemporary Christianity has lost the masculine sense of a struggle against the forces within oneself, having been watered down to passionate feelings and emotional ecstasies that men find difficult to identify with.”⁵⁸ The thoughts of the church being too feminine seems to be the consequences of those who are researching the absence of men in the church. There is an agreement that the church likes women and does little to minister to

⁵⁷ David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Press. 2005), 4.

⁵⁸ Podles Leon J. *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*. (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 201.

men. Whether or not one agrees with the scholars or educators of the church, men are absent and continue to be absent at an astonishing rate.

There have been several important mentions concerning the absence of men from the church derived from this document throughout the duration of humankind. How does all this inform the researcher of this project on what the church can do?

The strategy of the revivalist in the Second Great awakening in the 1830's was to approach men through their wives. This strategy shows the importance of women in the ministry of the church, it further enhanced the understanding that the church must take the opportunity to use every resource that has been given to it. The women are a great asset to the ministry of the church, but the researcher thinks that the church in the 21st century must become more aware of how the use of women can be a greater asset.

Women are not given to the church to be used to attract men to the ministry physically, therefore the church must coordinate on how women can play a more active role in the evangelistical ministry of the church. The church is constantly campaigning for men to return to the faith community. The researcher sees this as an opportunity to listen to women and hear their thoughts on why their husbands, sons, and male friends are not in church and apply some of those thoughts to its campaign agenda.

During the 1830-1930, it is said that in the United States, the nation changed from predominated agricultural nation to a more industrial and commercial nation. Therefore, as this shift came about men began to distance themselves from church. If a large portion of men are missing from church because of occupational issues then the researcher thinks that this would be an opportunity for the church to form some type of activities that would be conducive with those who hold a job. If men are absent from church because

church services or activities are during their working hour, then the church would do good to consider forming Bible studies and worship services during a time that would be more suitable for men. The researcher of this project understands that the church must be come marketable in the 21st century. If men won't come to church then the church must go to them. Times have changed and the church must be ready to meet the challenges of the changes of life in today's society.

During the Freethinking movement of 1880s, the men constituted seventy to eighty percent of the movement, seventy to eighty percent of the church members were women, and the same percentage of atheists were men. The Freethinkers viewed men as having superior reasoning and holding greater intellectual capabilities than women. The church at that time saw a great opportunity and began bridging the gap between men and women by not allowing men to be placed above women as superior thinkers. This movement allowed the researcher of this project not to place one gender up against another, but work to bring unity to the body of Christ, knowing we are all are God's children.

As the 19th century came about, ministers moved into the world of women. This could have happened because of the lack of men's interest in the church; the ministers may have seen men in the church as a lost cause. Ministry can be very taxing so perhaps ministers during the early 19th century thought that women were the only way to save their profession. The researcher believes if men are absent from the faith community, the community must make plans to reclaim men for the kingdom. This is another opportunity for the church to step outside its walls and do "kingdom work". The researcher would see this as an opportunity to take ministry to those who are outside.

After the Civil War, the church was viewed as a woman's institution. This was another missed opportunity for evangelism. It appears that the church was very narrow in its thinking during this time. The vision for the church was very small. The researcher will not lose an opportunity like this one to narrow the door ways to the church, but will view this as an opportunity to share the gospel with those outside the wall of the church. The church has no limitations to gender because this is the Lord's church. The Lord's church has been commissioned to go reach the lost and the misplaced ones.

It is evident that men are missing from the church and it seems that the church put men's interest aside. It did not help the fact that it was being rumored the church was for women and children. This was a missed opportunity to carry out the great commission to make disciples of all humankind. Men being missing from the church is not a men issue only, but it is an issue for the covenant community; God's church problem as well. The researcher believes that the church has been called to "go" where the gospel is needed most and do what is needed to reclaim all humankind. The church is not only for women and children, but it is for all of God's creation of every gender, race, and color. The historical findings during this project have challenged the researcher to look outside the wall of the church and ministry to the lost and the un-churched and share with them friendship, relationship, and God's love. This is a great opportunity for ministry and doing it God's way.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the path that leads to systems of examination that bring insight and understanding about situations that are a part of the world around us. Therefore methodology is the life line of the research and without methodology the research will lead to nowhere. The researcher has chose Qualitative Research and Action Research (AR) as the appropriate methodology for this project. According to John W. Creswell, “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting.”¹ Authors Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin in their book titled, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* said, “AR is social research carried out by a team encompassing a professional action researcher and members of an organization or community seeking to improve their situation.”²

For this study of “The Church Connecting With Un-churched Men: Building and Rebuilding Relationships Through Conversations,” the researcher chose to use the

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc. 2009), 4.

² Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc. 1998), 4.

methods of qualitative research and action research with data collection techniques including the following: interviews, conversations, questionnaires, observations during fellowship activities.

The Ministry Project

This project was about the relationship between the church and the un-churched. There are a large proportion of men who are un-churched and have no relationship with the church for various reasons. Men have watched from the outside as they looked inside and are not attracted to what they see. The researcher, along with his contextual associates and other members from the Living Church who made up the research team members,¹ designed a model project in which they and the un-churched men engaged in conversations and relationship building activities.

There were eight contextual associates chosen for this project, they were all members of the Living Church for ten plus years. Two others were added shortly after the project started, because of their interest in the ministry of the un-churched and because the researcher could use all the help he could receive. They were eight males and two females. The contextual associates were chosen because they have exemplified their dedication to the work of the ministry over the years and their passion for the ministry was evident in the way they performed the tasks they undertook at the church. There were four others from the congregation added to make up the research team members. There were also chosen because of their dedication to the ministry. Everyone chosen to work with the project was asked by the researcher to participate.

¹ Throughout this research report those who are working along with the researcher will be referred as "research team members."

While the church at large has been experiencing a shortage of male members, the researcher's context is no exception. A premise of the research was that if the faith community engaged in relationship building, then men will respond favorably. Steve Sonderman in his book *How To Build A Life Changing Men's Ministry* stated, "As we survey our country's spiritual and societal landscape it becomes apparent not only that men need ministries made for them but that men are looking for them as well."² If proper ministries are built, un-churched men will embrace the faith community and view the faith community through new lenses.

Hypothesis

The main goal of this project was to regain a relationship between the Church and un-churched men. The hypothesis was that if men are placed in a hospitable environment within the faith community they will respond positively. A hospitable environment is one in which the faith community responds with sincere kindness and honesty so that men will accept the invitation and be open to relationship. The environment would be male friendly and an environment where no one will have to put on airs but would be able to communicate one with the other to gain a greater knowledge of each other, whereby a relationship could be formed.

² Steve Sonderman, *How To Build A Life Changing Men's Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), 13.

Ministry Project Design

The researcher entered into this project with the expectation of creating or encouraging a relationship between the faith community and un-churched men. In this document the researcher uses faith community and church interchangeably. When the word church appears the researcher wishes the readers to understand that he is speaking of the congregation of the Living Church In the Lord Jesus Christ. The Living Church is the context in which this project was demonstrated. The Living Church is an African American Pentecostal congregation located in the rural area of McBee, South Carolina.

Relationship is the key factor for the success of any community, business, institution and especially the faith community. Relationship is bringing people together for the betterment and understanding of each other, it is the connection that brings people together in the same setting or involvement. The church has lost its relationship with a large portion of men, therefore these men have left the church in search of a new community outside the church community.

The researcher along with the Living Church family has an understanding that the faith community is comprised of men, women and children who make up a complete community or a family unit. If one gender is absent and becomes a missing link it offsets the community which instead becomes a dysfunctional family. The church is God's family on the earth and it is God's purpose that this family be whole and complete.

A misguided relationship produces a community which causes alienation. Men are in isolation from the faith community as will be shown throughout this project. Therefore this project was chosen for the betterment of the community of the Living

Church and to strengthen the relationship between the un-churched men in order to bridge the gap between the two. The researcher has a passionate desire to see men in the faith community on a much larger scale.

The un-churched men of this project were chosen because they are a vital part of the kingdom of God and they are missing from the movement of the faith community. The faith community cannot be all that that God is calling it to be without men in their proper place. The un-churched men of this project were called upon to work along with the researcher and the research team members to build or rebuild a relationship and bring the missing links together. The Living Church community was looking forward to opening a door where all of God's sons and daughters can come together in relationship

This project was designed to bring men who were un-churched into communion and fellowship with the faith community called the "church." The researcher describes communion as a hospitable relationship between the faith community and those who are un-churched. This communion is modeled as a doorway for relationship between the church and men. George Barna in his book titled *Grow Your Church from the Outside In* stated, "We define a person as un-churched if he or she has not attended a Christian church service at any time during the past six months, other than special events such as weddings and funerals."³ The researcher agreed with this definition and worked with men who fit this description.

The researcher and research team members chose ten (10) men to participate with this project. The men chosen for this project were men who only attended church in the

³ George Barna, *Grow Your Church From the Outside In* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books From Gospel Light, 2002), 23.

case of death of a family member or a friend and occasionally attended weddings or a number of other special events. These men attended church causally but were not active in the ministry of the church. There were a few men with no connections with the faith community and were asked at random to participate.

Pastoral supervision was in place during the duration of this project. Supervision is having the oversight of the event taking place. Oversight is having the understanding that there is a desired outcome, yet all the participants have a opportunity to share with each other. Supervision served as a reminder that all the participants, church and un-church, were there to learn and grow together. A key point in pastoral supervision is to be able to covenant with each participants by reflecting and sharing. During this project the researcher constantly reminded each participant about team work and working together. Men can be very private about what they say and do, therefore, the researcher covenanted with each participant that everything done or said would be a private matter with no individual names mentioned in the final document. Dr. Kenneth Pohly stated in his book, *Transforming the Rough Places*, “Pastoral supervision requires covenant making within its ancient understanding that it is an experience of gift between the covenanted partners, one in which there is a change of being; a covenanted people is a people changed utterly by the covenant.”⁴

The length of this research was from January 2010 to May 2010. The researcher and research team members had their first encounter with the men on January 4, 2010. The meetings and relationship building events were held every other Saturday of the

⁴ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of Supervision* (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publisher, 2001), 121.

month and Friday evenings were used randomly as needed. Each session lasted two to three hours. When this project was designed Saturday was chosen because it was the day that was most suitable for the un-churched men and for the research team members as well. Two training sessions for the research team members took place on Saturdays. The research team members were contextual associates and other members from the congregation of the Living Church. Once the project was initiated with the un-churched men, most of the conversations were done on Saturdays. Saturday was designed to have conversations and get to know each other. Basketball games were also on Saturdays. Friday nights were designed for fellowship and conversations as well. Two fellowship dinners were held on Friday nights.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The researcher and research team members which consisted of both males and females became the instruments by which the project was launched. The research project set out to demonstrate a model that would bring together people from the church to engage with men who were un-churched in order to identify ways to build or rebuild a relationship between them. Even though this project was about un-churched men, it was important to the researcher to use both males and females to participate with the un-churched men. The church is a community which is made up of both genders. In order to be a part of this community called the “church” the researcher believed that it was important for both genders to be represented. The research design called for attention to be given to men, particularly un-churched men.

Training the Research Team

The researcher organized a team of workers called the research team. The research team members worked with the researcher by inviting men to participate and by developing a model that would be instrumental in creating a platform for building relationships between the faith community and the un-churched. The research team consisted of members selected by the researcher as contextual associates and other persons from the researcher’s congregation. The researcher began this project with

training for the research team. The training was a vital part of the researcher's project because both the research team and the researcher were about to enter into unfamiliar territory. This was new territory because neither the research team nor the researcher had ever endeavored to build a one on one relationship with un-churched men. Therefore, every action of the research team and the researcher was very important and the project was not to be entered into lightly.

The researcher engaged the research team in two training sessions. Each session lasted from two to three hours. The training sessions were scheduled on two consecutive Saturdays, from 9 A.M. To 12 P.M. and consisted of conversations, reading requirements and a presentation on supervision (Appendix A).

The conversations held between research team members and other participants from the congregation of the Living Church were similar to ones that would be held with the un-churched participants. The researcher wanted the team members to be comfortable with interacting and communicating with persons outside the faith community. It was important to the researcher that the research team be able to respond to the un-churched men with a sense of sincerity and understanding. Those conversations, which were role-played, allowed the research team to express themselves and iron out some possible issues they might have in conversations with the un-churched men.

The training session with the research team members went well. Since most of the research team members were professionals or educators, they were able to role play. Therefore, the research team members were able to engage well, even though they all felt a need to practice conversation in order to prepare for their involvement with the un-

churched men. The main concerns of the research team members were that they did not want to appear distant and separated from the men. They wanted to make sure that their appearances were presentable. One of the concerns of the un-churched is that those from the church over dress and also men do not like a feminine oriented décor. An assumption of the researcher was that un-churched men would have been less likely to participate if the research team members and the researchers presented an environment that was not comfortable for un-churched men. If the research team members and the researcher were uncomfortable with their engagement with the un-churched men, then the men would have been less likely to continue with their participation. Therefore, the training sessions were necessary and helpful as the researcher and research team members prepared themselves to engage with the un-churched men.

Conversations between the researcher and the research team concerning expectations of the researcher were held. The researcher wanted the research team to ask questions and consider the importance of being a part of this research project. The conversations were designed to assure that everyone on the team had an understanding of the project. In the conversations, everyone was allowed to voice his or her concerns in dealing with the un-churched men and what would be expected of each person. Those conversations were about the faith community and the un-churched, particularly men. Each team member was reminded that this was more than a project, this was ministry and the ministry is about making disciples for the kingdom of God. Each person on the team was given a goal of what the researcher wanted to achieve (Appendix B). The format outlined things to consider and look for as the team engaged with the un-churched. In all training conversations, there were discussions about God, church, and the un-churched.

A second reading that was used during the training sessions was taken from a book authored by Patrick Morley, David Delk and Brett Clemmer entitled, *No Man Left Behind*, also listed in Appendix A. The book served as a manual that the researcher and the research team referred to throughout the research project. The book is about building men's ministry and is geared towards transforming men from being un-churched to becoming an active part of the faith community. The book was discussed and affirmed as a tool that would be helpful in dealing with as well as understanding better, the plight of the un-churched. The book placed God and the church as a top priority. The authors offered many scriptures in the context of the book. The researcher encouraged all the members of the research team to read all the scriptures the authors quoted. Before each training session the researcher engaged participants in conversations for about fifteen to twenty minutes to discuss the reading and other concerns.

Finally, each research team member, along with the researcher, was rehearsed on the importance of supervision. Supervision was one of the important elements of this project because each step in building or rebuilding relationship with the un-churched men had to be carefully thought out and needed some structure. Supervision allowed each participant to operate in a more proficient manner. Supervision allows everyone to talk and share. This is important because humankind is a creature of communication. Given the opportunity to talk opens up new understandings of each other as they speak. Talking is the beginning of building relationships. Every training conversation as well as conversation with the un-churched had elements of supervision. These elements were listening and sharing information. The research team used excerpts and information from Dr. Kenneth Pohly's book titled, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of*

Supervision. Dr. Pohly said, “Supervision provides a mirror for the supervisee to reflect on the situation and see it in all of its dimensions from a new perspective, not in a passive way but as a means to making responsible decisions about self and ministry.”¹ The research team members and the researcher kept in mind that the un-churched men were coming from a different perspective; therefore, the research team members and the researcher had to be prepared to understand that there was more than one way to see a matter. In Dr. Pohly’s book, *Transforming the Rough Places*, he described the supervisory conversation in a format of stages.

The supervisory conversations format stages are as listed below. The stages listed are those stages outlined by Dr. Pohly, the interpretation of the stages are that of the researcher.

1. Informative Stage: This stage is where the supervisee and the supervisor get acquainted with the situation at hand. In the case of the research team members and the researcher they engaged in what it would be like to be un-churched and posed questions that would help define the situation.
2. Evaluation Stage: In this stage, the research team members and the researcher asked questions about the problems faced in the situation. They asked questions concerning the things that would be important to the un-churched.
3. Analysis Stage: This stage is where the supervisee and the supervisor tried to figure out what would be the best way to be prepared to work with the un-churched. Here is where the research team members and researcher worked to

¹ Kenneth Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry Of Supervision* (Franklin, TN; Providence House Publisher, 2001), 117.

find out what they really wanted to achieve in the situation of the un-churched men.

4. Theologizing Stage: This stage is one where the supervisee and the supervisor work to bring relevancy between the situation and the gospel. In this case the research team members and the researcher brought together connections between the church and the un-churched and discussed the place for the gospel, God, and the church in the situation of the un-churched men.
5. Commitment Stage: This stage is the deciding stage. This stage is where you ask questions about what are you going to do with what you have. In the case of the research team members and the researcher they used this as a place for reflections for now and the future as the plight of the un-churched will be an ongoing process concern for the church.

The above five stages were helpful in organizing and preparing the research team members and researcher in staying on track as they were preparing to engage with the un-churched. These stages gave them a foundation and pattern that would lead them into mature conversations. Even though these five conversations stage were not followed completely during the engagement with the un-churched they were very instrumental in helping the research team members and the researcher lead meaningful conversations with the un-churched men. These stages were rehearsed twice during the training by the researcher and research team members and were commented on as being a very helpful resource tool when leading supervisory conversations with the un-churched. The entire research team members and the researcher referred to the supervisory conversations

format by Dr. Pohly to ask and shape questions as they engaged in conversations with the un-churched men. (Appendix C)²

The Project Design Part II

The items listed below were the areas that the researcher and the research team members engaged the un-churched men from January 4, 2010 and throughout the project which ended early in May 2010.

1. Questionnaires and Interviews.
2. Open discussions and heart to heart talks about the church and the individuals.
3. Open discussions about the importance of relationship with the faith community
4. A Super Bowl gathering for men. This allowed men who were un-churched to engage and connect with men who are church.
5. A men's Bible study titled, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*.³
6. Basketball games: Men went to basket ball games together to share and connect.
7. Fellowship dinner with the research team members, the un-churched men and the researcher.
8. Post Questionnaires and Interviews.

This project was about relationship building or rebuilding. In order for there to be a healthy men's ministry that fosters relationship, there must be a sense of brotherhood

² The Supervisory Conversation format of Dr. K. Pohly can be found in his book, *Transforming the Rough Places* on pages 118 and 119.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Book, 2001).

and sincerity. (RSV) Psalms 133:1 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” It has been the experience of the researcher that men want to be connected in some form of relationship with the faith community. Men in particular want to worship in an environment where men can worship God and keep their identity as men. Worship may or may not be in the church sanctuary. This thought was shared in some of the conversations by the un-churched men. Following the training session on Saturday, January 4, 2010, all the team members were present to begin the project. The researcher and the research team members met thirty minutes before the invited un-churched men arrived. It allowed time for prayer and some final questions and concerns that were still in the minds of some.

The Engagement Between the Church and the Un-Churched

The un-churched men began showing up about 9:45 A.M., Saturday morning January 4, 2010. The meeting was held in the Living Church fellowship hall. The ten men arrived and were very friendly and were ready to get started with the project. The meeting with the un-churched men was scheduled to commence at 10 A.M. and the research team members and the researcher made sure everything was in place and ready to begin on time.

The first session started at the appointed time. The researcher opened the session with a short welcome and prayer and thanked all participants as well as the research team members for agreeing to be participants in this research project. The researcher gave a brief overview of the project and explained some of the events that would occur during the duration of this research project. He invited participants to introduce themselves, and

after the introductions the researcher opened the floor for any questions or concerns that anyone had concerning the project. There were no concerns expressed at that time.

The first assignment was to start the questionnaires (Appendix D) and interviews (Appendix E). The men seemed eager to get started. Even though this was the men's first time being asked to do this sort of thing they were ready to get started. The un-churched men and research team members were all given private places to complete the questionnaires and the interviews. The process of the questionnaires and the interviews took about an hour to complete. After the completion of the questionnaires and interviews, everyone reported back to the main station. Each participant was paired up with a person to do the interviews and the questionnaires, the un-churched men requested to have someone to work with them because they did not want to do the questionnaires alone.

The researcher talked about the questionnaires and the interviews and asked questions about how well things went. The un-churched men appeared to be pleased and satisfied with the process. The un-churched men came back to the meeting area talking with each other about the process and made positive comments about the experience. The un-churched men commented by speaking or nodding that they were glad to help and were glad to have someone listen to them. They also stated that they were looking forward to working with the researcher and the research team members. The first meeting ended with gracious thanks from the researcher. He told the un-churched men how glad everyone was to have them as part of the research project and that the researcher and the research team members were looking forward to working with them for the next several weeks and beyond. Refreshments were available and the researcher and the research team

remained for another thirty minutes after dismissal in order to participate in a debriefing session.

During the debriefing session, the research team members and the researcher discussed the questionnaires and the interviews. The response from everyone was positive. The research team members commented that the un-churched men were pleasant and very corporative. The researcher and the research team members discussed changing or adding some questions to the questionnaires and the interview. The word “relationship” kept coming up during the time spent with the un-churched men. The researcher and the research team members agreed that relationship was important to this project and that adding more questions on the questionnaires and interviews would add to the project’s findings. The researcher and the research team members understood the importance of relationships and seeking to have better relationships in their own lives with the faith community. The research team members were pleased with how the first session was received by the un-churched men. There was a brief discussion about where this project could go. The team members suggested that this could be a ministry that could change the direction of the Living Church. The researcher and the research team members agree that this project might be the link in getting more men in the Living Church.

The second session, scheduled for January 30, was canceled due to inclement weather. It was rescheduled for February 7, 2010 Super Bowl Sunday. Super Bowl Sunday was a good time for some male bonding. The females of the research team decided that this would be an all male event. The un-churched men were contacted and invited to join the men of the Living Church for a Super Bowl gathering. All of the men

accepted the invitation with the exception of one who had previous plans. The Super Bowl gathering was held at the fellowship facility of the Living Church. The men of the research team were responsible for providing food and non-alcoholic beverages for the gathering. The Super Bowl gathering was for all the men in the Living Church. Prior to the event, the researcher talked with the men of the Living Church and briefed the men concerning the invited guests and asked them to be mindful of Christian fellowship and to remember that we are representatives of the faith community, namely the Living Church. The whole purpose of the Super Bowl gathering with the un-churched was to set in motion a bridge or relationship between the church men and the un-churched men.

February 7, 2010 Super Bowl Sunday finally arrived. Men began to congregate in the fellowship hall. This was the first of such gatherings held at the Living Church. The researcher saw this gathering as an important move toward evangelism to reach men. The researcher monitored the events because the researcher wanted to observe the reactions of the church men to the un-churched men. The men of the research team were asked to observe the interactions as well. The researcher and the research team members noted were how well the men from the church and the un-churched men connected with each other. They looked to see if they sat together, talked with each other or only talked with friends. Before the game began, there was approximately an hour in which the men engaged in conversation about various aspects of life such as jobs, politics and family life and they had a lot to say about which team each one hoped would win. As the un-churched men and the church men interacted, there was the sharing of names and greetings of welcome. Since some un-churched men were familiar with each other, it was a time of reconnecting.

About fifteen minutes before the game began, the researcher welcomed everyone and invited everyone to enjoy the evening with fun and fellowship. The researcher prayed and again shared with all the men his gratitude and thanksgiving for everyone present. One of the rules for that night was that during intermission, everyone was encouraged to speak or make contact with someone with whom they were unfamiliar.

The Super Bowl game between the New Orleans Saints against the Indianapolis Colts, set the men from the church and the un-churched on common ground; both groups enjoyed the competition of the teams. Each man cheered and rooted for his own team. The air was thick with the sound of “masculine aura” in the room, as the men were in high gear rooting for the team of their choice. Men taunted one another about which team was the best, but everyone had a good time. In spite of all this, respect for each other was present. During intermission, there were lots of talk about the final outcome of the game and which team would prevail. There was a particular sense of brotherhood in the room, men to men connecting. The researcher observed how well the men connected in the spirit of friendship and fellowship. The fellowship hall was housing men who were out of touch with the faith community but were now connecting with men of faith.

The Super Bowl game ended with the win of the New Orleans Saints as the champion. Before the men dismissed, the researcher made a few comments and once again thanked everyone for coming out to fellowship. The researcher announced the next time the un-churched and the research team members would meet. The men stayed around for another 20 to 30 minutes after the game was over to talk and continued enjoying conversations with one another. Some of the un-churched men shared their thanks for being invited and also made jokes that church men do know how to have fun.

This event was a sign to the church that if any kind of efforts are made men will connect to the faith community and want to be connected in some form. The researcher and the men from the research team shared their desire to do more to reach out to the community at large to build a bridge between the church and the un-church.

On the morning of February 20, 2010 the researcher and research team members arrived fifteen minutes before the scheduled time so that they could have a brief discussion of any concerns. There were no real concerns so prayer was offered and the group prepared themselves to receive the men. The un-church men began arriving about five minutes to the hour and the session was able to get started about 10:05 as scheduled. The researcher again welcomed everyone to the group and offered prayer.

This session was the beginning of the first of several conversations both supervisory and general, which were to come. Supervisory conversations were those conversations that were guided by the researcher or research team members in hopes to arrive at a particular answer or understanding of what the un-church men were saying concerning the faith community. The conversations in general were conversations that occurred randomly. This allowed all participants, especially the un-church men, to feel comfortable with talking and holding conversations. The researcher gave a brief overview of the purpose of the session. He spoke very candidly to the un-church men about the importance of having a real conversation with them. The researcher encouraged the un-church men to speak from their hearts and be as honest as possible. The researcher assured the un-church men that the information shared was for research purposes only and that their names would not appear in any public documents.

The researcher opened the conversation by asking the following two questions: “Why is church not an active part of your lives?” and “What can the faith community do to attract you?” The conversation started with the un-churched men responding to the questions. The majority of the answers were the same. One of the participants was the leader of the group. He was the out-spoken one and the one whom the other men agreed with; he was their voice. He was a good resource and because of his openness, it caused a chain-reaction with the others to open up. The first thing they wanted to talk about was God. The statement was heralded, “We have nothing against God, but we do have a problem with church.” The conversation around God was all positive. The un-churched men expressed their disappointment with the church. They felt that the church had let them down in many ways. During the meeting, seven of the ten un-churched men stated that no one from the faith community had ever approached them about their absence from the community of faith.

The un-churched men seemed to have passion about not being approached about their absence. The faith community showed little or no interest for the most part; therefore, the church became unattractive to the un-churched men. The un-churched seemed to want a relationship with the faith community without actually being connected as members of the local congregation. They referred often to outside involvements such as community service, working with the elderly, youth events, or anything that could bring the community together. In this second meeting the men were very much open to discussion. This meeting was instrumental in giving leeway into the conversations that would follow. This meeting ended with the un-churched men yet pledging their allegiance to continue working with the researcher and the research team. The un-

churched men were thankful that they were being listened to and that their voices were heard. The meeting ended with the researcher giving final comments on what had been said and announced the date of the next meeting: February 20, 2010. The researcher and the research team members stayed behind for a thirty-minute debriefing.

The researcher and the research team members reflected on the conversations with the un-churched men and were taken by the way the un-churched men expressed the lack of attention from the faith community. The researcher and the research team members discussed the passion that the men had when speaking of the feeling of being overlooked by the faith community. The un-churched men wanted relationships and the researcher and the research team members discussed the next step to take for a more personal involvement with these men. The researcher and the research team members agreed that the un-churched men were not ready for transition into the church congregation. This decision was made based upon conversations with the un-churched men. The researcher and the research team members decided that the men from the research team should spend a little more time with the men. They called it Man To Man Connection, and the men of the research team decided to invite the un-churched men to attend a basketball game at the local high school.

March 6, 2010 worked well because the local high school basketball teams had a basketball tournament. Some of the men from the un-churched sector had children who would be playing and had not seen them play this season, so this was an opportunity to see their children play as well as have a connection with the men from the church. One of the men for the research team, who is a high school teacher, was scheduled to coach some of the games for that day.

The researcher and the research team members, along with the un-churched men, agreed to meet that morning in order to experience the games together. The un-churched men particularly, thought this was a good idea and gave praise to the researcher and research team members for sharing this event. The games lasted for several hours, but because of the excitement and conversations, it appeared as a short time. Again, as the researcher and the male research team members did during the Super Bowl gathering, they observed the fellowship and unity between the church and the un-churched men. Observations were made during the process of the gathering. The researcher wanted the research team members to observe the interactions between the church and the un-churched men. Things to observe were: body language, comfortableness as they encountered each other, the church and un-churched connecting with each other in conversations and fellowship. The researcher and research members discussed those things. Their observations were developed in oral conversations and the researcher recorded it as part of the study (Appendix G). It appeared to the researcher that men enjoyed the competition between the basketball teams. It appeared that there was some kind of chemistry between men and aggression. As the basketball player would beef up the game by running faster to make a shot before the buzzer rang the men were all on their feet yelling "shot, shot." The more aggressive the players played, the more excited the men became. The men from the church as well as the un-churched men showed much excitement during the games.

During these games, there were much more verbal conversations and more casual contact shared between the men. Even though the un-churched men appeared to be comfortable at the fellowship hall at the Living Church, there was no doubt that the

setting at the school was more fitting for them. At the school setting they were not particular about their clothing. At the completion of the games the un-churched men expressed that the games excited them, but the fellowship was more appreciated. It appeared that the un-churched men have an appreciation for relationships with other men, relationships that are not threatening to their ego. The un-churched men once again suggested that we should do more of this kind of involvement together. The researcher and the male research team members agreed.

The researcher and the research team (males) debriefed for a short while to discuss the fellowship and the events of the basketball games with the un-churched men. The researcher and the research team members (males) talked about the unity of all the men. They believed that the feeling of brotherhood and closeness was experienced by all. This was one of the first encounters with hands shakes and a few hugs from some, not all; but all were warm and friendly.

March 20, 2010, the researcher and the research team met to discuss the past events. They also revisited the Pohly conversation model. The piece from the model that discussed theological reflection and conversation was of interest to all. The research team members wanted to be able to be more open about having conversations about God without appearing over-religious. The researcher and the research team discussed how to form the correct "question" without making the un-churched men feel uncomfortable. In Pohly's model on the supervisory conversations, the questions were kept simple and clear. The theological conversations with the un-churched men were entered into very meticulously. The Pohly model allowed the team members to view theological questions without the fear of being over-bearing, questions such as "What part does God play in

your life?” or “Is God necessary for your spiritual journey?” There were discussions of comfortableness that all were experiencing working with the un-churched men. The researcher scheduled the next meeting with the un-churched and the research team for April 3, 2010.

April 3, 2010 the researcher and the research team members arrived about 20 minutes before the un-churched men began to arrive. There was a brief discussion about whether the research team members and researcher wanted to lead the conversations toward God or follow the feeling that the group had been sensing from the un-churched men about wanting a relationship with the faith community. The researcher decided to initiate both subjects into the conversation for that day.

The un-churched men arrived about 10 A.M. as scheduled for April 3, 2010. The researcher and the research team were in place to receive them. The un-churched men came except two; they were absent but had indicated that they would be absent. The researcher asked a research team member to open with scripture and prayer. The researcher was given the floor and the researcher once again welcomed everyone and thanked them for their consistency and participation. The researcher opened the discussion by asking two questions: “How important is God to each of your lives?” “How important is having relationship with the faith community?” The un-churched men all responded very highly of God. They had no problem talking about their love for God. They kept reminding the researcher that their absence from the church is not due to God, but that the church has lost its relevance. As a result, the un-churched don’t see a real need to attend church. The conversations turned from God to the problems with the church. The men spoke very candidly about alternative worship from the traditional

church setting to some non-traditional church setting. They picked back up with the relationship questions and all of them said the only reason they were participating with this researcher in this project was because they wanted a relationship with the faith community and but they also wanted their voices to be heard.

The un-churched men said that this was relationship: sitting around the table having conversations and hanging out. For most of them, they responded that this was the first time they felt connected to the church in a long time. They said they wanted to talk and they also wanted to see more than a choir sing and hear a preacher preach; they were ready for some action. The researcher asked during this session what more could the faith community do to bring them closer into relationship. The response from one of the un-churched man was "Do more of what you are doing now; talk with us and not at us." They frequently ended their comments by saying "I love God." The fact that the researcher and research team members heard the un-churched men say they wanted relationship, led the researcher to believe that the research team members and the researcher were on a good path. The session ended with words from the researcher. The researcher thanked the un-churched men for speaking their hearts and pledged to them that he would work more diligently to build better relationships between them and the faith community. The next scheduled meeting was April 16, 2010 and included a fellowship dinner at a local restaurant. The researcher invited the un-churched men as well as the research team members to bring family or friends if they liked. There was no debriefing after this meeting. The researcher and the research team members did voice to each other that the church had some relationship-building to do. The researcher and the research team members were sensitive to the remarks that the un-churched men made

concerning feeling left outside and separated from the faith community. The researcher and the research team members felt that the remarks were true and the church needed to do more work toward evangelism.

April 16, 2010 at 7 P.M. the fellowship dinner was scheduled at Shoney's restaurant in the town of Hartsville, SC, 15 miles south of the Living Church which is located in McBee, SC. The researcher and the research team members decided this dinner engagement would be strictly for fellowship. There would be no particular conversation held. This would be a time for getting better acquainted with each other as brothers and sisters. The researcher arrived at the restaurant about thirty minutes before everyone else. The researcher wanted to make sure there was enough space reserved for every one that participated in the fellowship dinner.

Participants began arriving about 6:45 P.M., and by 7:15 P.M., everyone was seated and the fellowship began. The unusual thing that the researcher noticed was none of the un-churched men except one brought family members. All of the research team male members brought their spouses. The un-churched men seemed to be very comfortable coming to the fellowship dinner alone.

The evening was filled with laughter and fun. The conversations had no structure; they were straight from the heart conversations. God and church came up several times during the evening and each time, the subjects were presented by one of the un-churched men. Some of the men had not gone out to a restaurant for a couple of years, not because they could not have afforded it but simply because they did not want to. When asked why they decided to come to this fellowship dinner, the answers were clear: "We wanted to share with our friends from the church." Since the project began, the researcher and the

research team were often referred to as “my church people.” By being referred to as church people, the researcher and the research team viewed this as a connection and a relationship forming.

The evening was exciting for all as evidenced by the jokes and laughter. The spouses of the research team were amazed at how relaxed and cordial everyone was to each other, especially the un-churched men. The spouses did not expect such brotherhood. The researcher later commented to some of the research team members in response to the spouses’ expectations of the un-churched, that maybe the church at large has some negative conceptions about the un-churched. The researcher stated that the perception of the church toward these outsiders has to change. The researcher had last-minute comments and words of appreciation for the participation of both the research team and the un-churched. The researcher wanted to make a connection with the un-churched men. He wanted them to feel comfortable with those from the faith community. The communication and the conversations assured the researcher that the fellowship dinner was a success. One of the un-churched men said, “This is the best time I had during a dinner in a long time.”

The dinner ended with everyone greeting each other with hugs and handshakes. The researcher announced the next and perhaps final session for this project, but definitely not the fellowship. The final date scheduled for the last session was May 9, 2010.

May 9, 2010 was a Saturday morning; the researcher and the research team members met at 9:30 A.M. and discussed the event of the day, which was to have the un-churched men once again answer the questionnaire and interview questions (Appendix D

and E) given them at the inception of the project. The un-churched men began to arrive at the fellowship hall at 9:50 A.M. and were ready to begin the session. The session began at 10:05 with all the un-churched men in place except two. Their absence was due to a situation beyond their control. They called the researcher to explain why they could not be present at this time.

The session opened with a prayer by the researcher. The researcher opened the floor by checking with everyone about how they were doing and again reaffirmed to everyone his appreciation for their participation in the project. Officially this was to be the last meeting with the un-churched men but conversations got started about the church and the church relationship to the community at large. The un-churched men wanted to talk more on why they have been absent from the church. The first question was posed by one of the un-churched men. The question was "Is the church a community for all people or is it a club for a chosen few?" The un-churched man continued to explain why he asked the question. He stated his understanding of what a community is. His understanding is that a community consisted of all kind of people with some form of relationship. He felt totally alienated from the church because he said until now, no one from the faith community showed an interest in him as a person. He said occasionally someone would stop and ask for a donation for the church but never tried to invite him into the community. This man's questions and thoughts sparked a very long conversation that would last longer than the other sessions.

The agenda for the day was aborted and the conversations continued in the vein concerning community and relationship. The un-churched men were critically concerned with the way the faith community has dealt with them. One of the men described himself

as a lost sheep who just wandered out of the community, and to his surprise no one came to look for him or reclaim him. He said, "As a matter of fact, I was treated as if I was not missed and my presence was not needed." At this point, the researcher asked the question "What do you want from the church?" One man said jokingly, "I want an apology from the church." He said his feelings were hurt because no one showed an interest in him as a child of God. He said he is not absent from the church; the church is absent from him. The researcher asked what he meant by that statement and he said that the church is absent because it is his understanding that the church has a responsibility to reach out to those on the outside, especially to the so-called lost ones.

One of the researcher team members was speaking to the un-churched men and asked, "What is it that you want from the church?" An immediate response to the question was "I want the church to recognize me as one of God's children." Another response to the question was "I want the church to be more inviting to those of us who are not within the walls of the church building." One of the un-churched men said, "All I want is for the church to love me for whom I am." Another said, "I am their brother too and I would like for the church to remember that." The researcher asked one last question to the un-churched men: "What were your thoughts of the times spent with the group as well as the project?" One of the men responded, "If you and your people here are a representative of the church there might be some hope that I will return." He said, "This is the first time in a long time that I felt connected to the church or at least that somebody in the church cared." The men nodded their heads in agreement with the man's remarks and voiced one by one their thanks for being asked to participate with the project.

This session lasted three hours compared with the other sessions which lasted two hours. The un-churched men kept pressing the issue of wanting to belong. The researcher ended the sessions by expressing his and the team members gratitude for being allowed to work with the participants (the un-churched men). The researcher was apologetic to the un-churched men for the church's failure to reach out to them as well as the community at large. The researcher assured them that the effort of the church (the Living Church), would be expanded by becoming more visible to all people. The researcher said that the church would make every effort possible to stay connected to them. The session ended and the researcher rescheduled the time for questionnaires and the interviews for the following Friday, which would be May 13, 2010. Everyone agreed to meet and the session ended.

The researcher and the research team members remained behind for a debriefing of the meeting. They all were overwhelmed with the conversation and the passion in which the men spoke concerning the church. There was no doubt in the researcher's mind that the men wanted more from the church; they wanted a relationship. The researcher and the research team members wished for more time to work with this project and were feeling some pressures about bringing it to an end.

Friday May 13, 2010, the final session for the revisiting of the questionnaires and interviews began at 10:00 A.M. The researcher and the research team members met at 9:30 A.M. in preparation for the final session. They talked about the project and the implications that the project would have on the church in the coming months. The researcher and research team members made themselves ready for the un-churched men. The un-churched men started arriving at 10:10 AM. Nine of the ten un-churched

men were present. The session started with prayer and the researcher offered his thanks and appreciation once again for all the participants. The researcher explained that the questionnaires and the interviews were the same as was given at the beginning of the project. The researcher explained to the un-churched men the importance once again for their honesty in answering the questionnaires and the responses to the interview. There was also a second questionnaire added because the researcher and the research team felt that there needed to be some more direct questions on community and relationship (Appendix D) because the un-churched men kept hinting to a relationship during the project.

The researcher and the research team members had begun the process of teaming up with the un-churched men so that they could revisit the questionnaires and the interviews. The un-churched men were ready to engage with the events of the day. The questionnaires and the interviews were held privately one on one between the researcher and the research team members and the un-churched men. There were places allotted to the group where the process could take place. The completion of the interviews and the questionnaires lasted an hour and a half. After all were finished with the questionnaires and the interviews everyone returned to the meeting place. There was a thirty-minute discussion about the events that had just taken place. The researcher asked the un-churched men, did the process seem different than the first time and they all in unison agreed with a gesture of head nodding yes. There was a brief discussion on what things were different. The researcher will key in on that discussion in the summary of this project.

The researcher talked with the un-churched men and the research team members about the importance of this work. The researcher expressed that this is not the end of the church striving to rebuild or build a relationship with men outside the walls of the church. The researcher reaffirmed that the research team members desired to keep the work moving in a more positive way that will ensure that this work is not forgotten and that the church programs be available to all of God's children. The research team members expressed their gratitude for having the opportunity to work with the un-churched men. The un-churched men were in agreement that this project was a great idea and expressed their desire to continue in fellowship. The session ended with hugs, handshakes, and promises to stay in fellowship.

During this project, a Bible study was formed. The book entitled *Disciplines of a Godly Man* written by R. Kent and the Holy Bible were the texts used and continued to be used. The Bible study was for men only. In the Bible study men's issues were discussed with biblical principles and the men were encouraged to participate in the study. Issues discussed were purity, marriage, fatherhood and friendship. The researcher invited all the men of the Living Church and the un-churched men to participate in this Bible study. The researcher believed that the Bible study would be another bridge to build relationship with the church and the un-churched men.

The Bible study met and continues to meet the first Monday of each month, the study time was and is from 7 to 8:30 P.M. The researcher understood that the project would end but the Bible study would continue. The un-churched men did not attend the Bible study in large numbers. Four of the ten un-churched men attended the Bible study and showed interest in the studies. Some of the men church and un-church had

conflicts with work schedules. This played a part with them not being able to attend the Bible study. This Bible study was created for disciplines and godly living based on scriptures. The men who attended the Bible study partnered in groups of five men to elaborate on sessions of the chapter being discussed. Each group appointed a spokesperson to bring back to the entire group the things that they deemed worthy of importance in the session that was assigned them. Eventually the opportunity for all to talk was allowed, and anything that were of interest could be talked about. The men from the church as well as the un-churched talked in the Bible study and were eager to have the conversations with each other. A copy of the book *Disciplines of a Godly Man* was given to each man. At each meeting a chapter was to be read in advance. This Bible study allowed men church and un-churched to share together on men issues. The researcher's observation was that men are men regardless and when given an opportunity, they wanted to be heard and they wanted to share thoughts and feelings. The men from the church as well as the un-churched men told the researcher as they talked with each other that this Bible study was and is a great idea and is appreciated.

Collection of Data

The gathering of data was collected by several different methods. The researcher chose to use tape recordings of each session, interviews, journals, debriefings and questionnaires.

The researcher did a tape recording of each session, particularly those of group conversations. Each person participating in the session was notified of the recording and

signed a written agreement that the researcher had notified them and was given permission to make the recording. (Appendix F). The recording served as a tape recorded journal for the researcher. These tape recordings were instrumental to the researcher as he prepared the final outcome of the project. The recording allowed the researcher to review and refresh his mind and add to his personal written journal items that were missed during the actual session. The researcher was the only one to use the tape recording.

The interviews were pre-written questions the research team member asked the un-churched men. The interviewers asked the questions that were written on the forms and documented the answers by hand writing or typing them on the form (Appendix E). Space was provided which allowed the interviewers to write in new questions if it became necessary. The interviewers invited the interviewees the opportunity to answer questions that were related to men and in particular themselves. These interviews allowed the researcher and the research team member to understand the thoughts of the un-churched men concerning their relationship or non relationship to the church.

Each member of the research team along with the researcher was asked to keep a journal of each session. Each member of the research team was asked to keep notes on all the sessions and write their own thoughts and concerns of each session. They were asked to highlight in color those things that were most important to them whether the thoughts were from the session or from their own experiences. These journals were instrumental to the researcher at the end of the project. At the completion of the project all journals were turned in to the researcher. The researcher read all journals and documented the important points especially those that most of the team members agreed upon. There journals were typed for clarity and were made easier for the researcher to read.

There was collective debriefing after every session among everyone who participated. Collective debriefing occurred when the research team members and the un-churched men along with the researcher recaptured the sessions together. The actual purpose of this debriefing was to get the un-churched men to talk and express themselves concerning their engagement in the process of the project and what the session meant to them.

Everyone in this process was asked one particular question: "What stood out the most in this session or what was most important?" This information was logged in the journals and was used to better understand the plight and thought of the un-churched men in particular. Everyone participated in this collective debriefing but mostly the un-churched men were encouraged to speak.

Following the debriefing of the session with all participants, a second debriefing was held with only the researcher and the research team member. This allowed the researcher and the research team to discuss the session among themselves. It was during these debriefing that the research team members were invited to express ideas and suggestions as well as give thoughts on how the sessions were going. This debriefing was also helpful in the keeping of the journals because things that were important were always discovered. These debriefings helped the team prepare for the next meeting or event and to refine the work.

Pre and post questionnaires were given to determine the thoughts and thinking of the un-churched men. These questionnaires were administered at the outset of the project and again at the conclusion in order to compare changes that were made during the

process. The questionnaires were administered by research team members. The researcher has chosen several different methods to collect data in order to reach the goal he set out. The goal was to research and come to an understanding of why men were absent for the faith community and to create a project that would connect with un-churched men to build or rebuild a relationship.

Through the triangulation of this data the researcher was able to understand the plight of men's absence from church and was able to work toward a better relationship with connecting with the un-churched men in building relationships with the faith community.

Analysis of Data

The researcher gathered analysis data from materials collected. The researcher and the research team members used supervisory conversations and general conversations, personal fellowship, interviews and questionnaires. These techniques were used to view the data of the un-churched men who were participants in the research project. The researcher was able to identify from answers gleaned from the interviews, questionnaires, and the status of the un-churched men in regards to their relationship to the faith community. The researcher compared the pre-answers to the post answers to the same interviews and questionnaires in order to answer the researcher problem on "The Church Connecting With Un-Churched Men: Building and Rebuilding Relationship Through Conversation."

Supervisory Conversations and General Conversations

The researcher and the researcher team members held and observed supervisory conversations and general conversations with the un-church men. The supervisory conversations were those conversations which were guided by the researcher and the research team members. General conversations were those conversations at random which the researcher, team members or the un-churched men chose to talk about without any particular structure.

It was observed by the researcher and the research team members that men enjoyed talking and wanted to be heard. One of the un-churched men said, "Finally someone is listening to what I have to say." Some times the research team members heard statements like, "Do you really want to know what I am thinking?" In relationship every party should have a voice. The researcher believes that one of the reasons men are outside the community is because the faith community has been somewhat deaf to hear what they had to say. It appeared that the men felt as if no one was really listening or wanted to hear what they had to say. During these conversations (general conversations) the researcher yielded the floor to the un-churched men and they sometime talked as if they were the only persons in the room or in their own little social club. The researcher and the research team members observed the passion of the conversations as the un-churched men talked. A key factor to these conversations is men have things they want to say to and about the faith community without being hushed.

To know what men want, somebody had to listen to what is being said. The conversations were very important to the men. One of the men said, "If my wife would

listen to me maybe I would come to church with her some time.” Another man said, “The reason I hang out with the boys we understand each other and I can talk with them.” These conversations were important because it allowed the researcher and the research team members to take a step closer to build or rebuilding relationship with the un-churched men by listening to them. Another man said to the researcher who is the pastor of the Living Church, “You are the only preacher who doesn’t do all the talking, I might come and hear you preacher.”

During one of the conversation the researcher asked the un-churched men what relationship means to them. One of the response was, “Relationship to me is when I listen to you and you listen to me.” He went on to say, “How can I be a help to you in any way if we don’t talk, I am not a mind reader.” He further stated, “I just don’t come home sometime, because I need to talk and I need somebody to listen.” A few of the men stated that during these conversations this was the first time in a long time that somebody listened to what they had to say. Again one of the un-churched men stated, “I could go to a church where the preacher listens and can hold conversation without condemnation.” Those conversations were very important to the un-churched men. It gave them a sense of belonging to the community.

One question which was lifted during one of the supervisory conversations by one of the research team member was, “What can the Church do for you as men?” A response was “stop talking so much and listen some time. I cannot be a part of a system where my voice does not mean anything.” These conversations gave strong evidence to the researcher that men want to be a part of a community that listens and has dialogue with

session lasted over the time that was allotted to them. Sometimes these conversations spilled over to the outside of the meeting place.

The researcher and the research team members observed the actions of the participants. There were actions such as willing to talk and their openness for more discussions concerning their lives and relationship with the faith community. The men wanted to have conversation. All ten men agreed that conversation was key to any connection where they are involved. The researcher anticipates that these conversations will lead to building or rebuilding relationship.

Personal Fellowship

The personal fellowship was measured by the participation of all ten men along with the researcher and the research team members. Personal fellowship included basketball games, Super Bowl gathering, and dining out. The personal fellowship brought the un-churched men into a closer contact with the researcher and the research team members outside of a religious setting. The personal fellowship was designed in order that the researcher and the research team members could observe relationship behavior of un-churched men with the church person outside the usually meeting place which was the fellowship hall of the church.

The basketball games and the Super Bowl gathering were only attended by the male participants from the research team members alone with others brothers from the Living Church. The basketball games were held at the McBee High School. The researcher and research team members observe male bonding during these basketball games. Eight of the ten un-churched men attended both of the basketball games. The two

that were absent were due to work schedules. There were two games on the same day. The men expressed warm greetings as the researcher and the research team members met at the high school. One of the un-churched men said, "It is a good thing to have the pastor and the brothers' hangout with fellows like us." "Fellows like us," referred to men who do not go to church.

The entire group sat together at the game. Six out of the eight men un-churched who had attended the games said this was the first time they been to a game in some years. The un-churched men and the church men enjoyed the games together. The un-churched men consented together that they would like to do more of these type things. One of the un-churched men stated, "I did not know you church dudes knew how to have fun." After he made that statement he patted the pastor (the researcher) on the back. The basketball games allowed the men from the church and the un-churched men to become more familiar with each other on a more personal level.

The Super Bowl gathering was met with a special type of male bonding. There was the feeling of brotherhood in the room. Before the game got started the men from both sides were meeting and greeting. This gave the researcher the opportunity to observe the connection of church men with un-churched. The men seem to have a lot in common as they participated in conversations with each other before the game got started. One of the research team member reported that most of the conversations he was engaged in was about church or God. Some of the conversation that was observed was discussion about dissatisfaction with the church. The un-churched men made statements about the church becoming a little more male friendly. For several of the men who

attended the Super Bowl gather they stated, that this was the first time they had been invited to a church sponsored events without having to pay.

The Super Bowl gathering was filled with excited men. The un-churched men who were invited from the research project came except one. The time spent together was fun and very male friendly. The researcher observed how well all the men connected with each other. One of the un-churched men stood up and publicly thanked the researcher for having the gathering. His words were "I like what you are doing, bringing us men together." The other clapped their hands in approval. This one statement told the researcher that bringing the faith community together with those who have been left out is instrumental in reaching un-churched men.

The success of the Super Bowl gathering was evident by the participation of all and the consent of all that this is a good opportunity to get to know your brother. The men in the room referred to each other often only as brother.

Interviews

The interviews were administered by the research team members to the un-churched men. The interviews were the first business of the day as the project began in January of 2010. The un-churched men arrived on time and were settled for about fifteen to twenty minutes before the process of interviews began. The location of the gathering for this session was in the fellowship hall of the Living Church. The researcher and the research team members had a brief conversation about the interviews and discuss questions that would be asked during the interview. They were given an interview guideline to follow (Appendix E). The questions were simple and easy to understand.

The researcher did not want complex questions that might intimidate the un-church men. The researcher also did not want the un-churched men to feel an infringement upon their personal lives.

The researcher explained the process to the un-churched men and answered any questions they had. Each researcher team member was appointed a location to administer the interviews and was appointed an un-churched man to interview. There were ten un-churched men to be interviewed. The process of the interview lasted about an hour.

One question that was asked was “Which parent focused greatest importance on worship?” All ten men answered that their mothers were the one who placed importance on worship. All ten men commented in some way said that their fathers did not go to church and often time keep them home with them. When asked, “When was the last time you attended church?” Three out of ten said, they did not remember the last time they been too church. Four said they go to church on Mother’s Day and three said they attended a musical in the last year. All except one said they attended church in the last year for a funeral. When asked, “Do you think church has anything to offer you as a man?” The answers varied and each interviewer said that the men were reluctant to answer the question. It appeared to the interviewers that the men did not want to answer in the negative. The answers to this question were very general, they make statement like, “I am not sure or I guess.”

It is clear that the men held some kind of respect for the church but yet did not know how to affirm the faith community. One final question during the interviews was “What can the church do to gain or regain your trust?” One answer was “Stop talking so

much and do something, I want to see the church come to my neighborhood and knock on my doors like the Jehovah Witness does.” Six out of the ten answers to the question suggested that the men wanted the church to do more community service and if they could see that, then the church would regain their trust.

The interviews suggest that the men really want to be a part of the faith community and they are waiting on the faith community to take action. The men were not interested in just attending a worship service but they wanted to be a part of a community that is working among the community at large to make a difference. One of the men made this statement during the interviews, “I feel God every day, but I do not feel the church no days.”

Questionnaires

The pre questionnaires were given by the researcher and the research team members to the un-churched men. One of the first findings was all ten un-churched men when asked, “Do you believe in God?” answered the question by affirming they do believe in God. This finding agrees with the statement that was made during one of the conversations earlier in the project when one of the un-churched men stated, “I have no problems with God but I do have problems with the church.” During the post questionnaire the answer to the same question remained affirmative. The ten un-churched men shared belief in God, yet they had no relationship with the church.

Even though the ten un-churched men believed in God, when asked, “Do you consider yourself a spiritual person,” five of the men answered, “Not at all” and five answered “A little.” The five men, who stated that they are not spiritual at all, said it

because they do not go to church very often. The other five who answered a little, according to the interviewers said they pray. There appeared to be little relationship between their beliefs about God and their sense of spirituality.

During the post examination to the same question above three of the men answered, “A little,” and seven of the un-churched men wrote in the answers, “A little more than before.” The answers though slightly changed indicated to the researcher that time spend with the un-churched men made a difference.

During the pre questionnaire one of the questions asked was “If you are having personal problems, how likely is it that you will talk with a pastor?” All ten men answered “Not at all.” The researcher viewed this as a mistrust issue. Where there is not trust there is no sound relationship. One of the goals of the researcher was to gain or regain trust of the un-churched men.

The post questionnaire answer to the same questions showed a shift, all ten men affirmed they would talk “some.” They all made statements that not all pastors can be trusted. There were some connection and progress made during the duration of this project, because the opinions of the men were becoming more favorable. According to the pre questionnaire the un-churched men were disenchanted with the church. Yet they affirmed that the church is important. The post questionnaire examination showed a shift in the answers that the un-churched men gave. They were more favorable toward the church. Answers changed from “Not at all,” to “Some.” The pre questionnaires allowed the researcher and the research team members to work toward building relationship with the un-churched men.

Summary of the Results

The researcher set out to explore why men were not as present in the faith community as women. The researcher found many reasons why men were absent from the church. Because of the many reasons found the researcher thought it would be an adventure and an exciting journey to develop a project that would serve as a vehicle to direct, redirect or encourage men to attend church. This led to another path, the path of relationships and relationship-building.

The researcher and research team members created a model to develop an avenue which would lead to relationship with men who are un-churched. The researcher understood that there would not be enough time to work the un-churched men into the main stream of the church in the time allotted this project, but there was time to create relationships. The researcher understands relationship as the ability to engage oneself with a community, place or thing.

The finding gleaned from this project indicates that relationship is the missing link between the church and the un-churched men, and it is very pivotal if the un-churched men are going to return to church or begin attending for the first time, in this case, the Living Church. The project was designed to work with men who have experienced or not experienced a relationship with the church. The data analysis taken from the questionnaire II validates that men want relationship with the faith community. Also the conversations that the un-churched men participated in, pointed to a desire for relationship with the faith community.

The researcher and the research team members worked to create an environment that was conducive to men. In conversations, the un-churched men were drawn to the researcher and the research team members and with each other as relationships began to build. The conversations allowed the un-churched men to voice what was missing between them and the church, which alluded to the absence of relationship.

The interviews and the questionnaires, pre and post, were very important in assessing the data. The pre interviews and questionnaires identified the lack of trust and distance that the un-churched men had. In regards to the church, the post interviews and questionnaires showed a shifting in the attitude that the un-churched men had with the church. The data analysis reveals that the un-churched men felt better and friendlier toward the faith community after the project. This was indicated by one of the answers taken from the Interview when asked, "How willing are you to go to church now and take part in the activities of the church?" Pre answers to this question were mostly negative, at the end of the project the same question was asked the majority of the men answered said it is very likely they would be willing to take part in the church and church activities.

The personal fellowships with the un-churched men included participating in basketball games and dining out. These activities helped demonstrate that the un-churched men enjoyed being in the company of church men and could comfortably build relationships with the church community. The personal fellowship was pivotal in this project because it allowed the church and the un-churched men to enter into a more intimate relationship with each other. The men were very approving of the personal approach. What Barna had to say about men liking the personal approach proved to be true as the researcher of this project worked with the un-churched men. The un-churched

men as a whole agreed that the personal invitation for them to participate in this project was the reason they were so willing to accept the invitation.

The data suggested that the attitude of the un-churched men changed and the participation was warranted. The researcher believes that the more time that is given to the un-churched men the greater the results. It takes time to build long-lasting relationships. The researcher's data analysis pointed to a positive relationship if un-churched men are given an opportunity to engage in the community of faith. The un-churched men of this project showed in their attitudinal support that men want to be a part of the church. They are asking indirectly for the faith community to engage in a way that will allow them to feel wanted and needed.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSIONS

The absence of men from the church is not a new or passing phenomenon. There have been numerous reports of church growth but men are still not attending church as women. Has the church forgotten its missing parishioners and decided to continue on the journey without seeking those who are missing for whatever reasons there might be? After all the church is a community of believers of all genders, race and creed. As the researcher reminisces over past experiences he had as he participated with men who are not presently attending church, he gained new insights as well as new questions.

What does the church do with the mission it has adopted? Maybe, the mission of the church is written down in black and white and is lying in some files on record resting. God is a missional God and because the church belongs to God the church must be about mission. Mission is nothing more than reaching out to make things better for the people in which the church is called to serve.

Further insight, is the absence of supervision in many congregations. Supervision can lead to a positive result reaching those who are outside of the faith community and bring them into communion with their brothers and sisters of the faith. Furthermore, supervision is not only important for those outside but are pivotal for those on the inside, because supervision can lead to meaningful conversations which will lead to a better relationship. It appears to the researcher that the church has lost sight of covenant

relationships. The agreement made by the faith community to reach out to all by any means necessary. Being in covenant is not always easy but is necessary. If covenant is kept relationships are more meaningful and the assignment is taken more seriously.

There were new questions which arose as the researcher completed his research. Questions such as, 'Can the church continue claiming to be God's community if it continue to ignore the absent of men?' Because the church is called to go forth and make disciples (students) of all humankind, the church has missed the mark in its ministry to un-churched humankind and men in particular. Will the church in the 21st century continue to move forward as if everything is going well? The church has an assignment, which is to undo the wrong and make it right. It is not right to ignore the absence of men in the church. A final question is, 'will the church stop business as usual and make good the request of our Lord Jesus Christ to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all humankind?' Those are some of the questions and thoughts that the researcher wrestles with as the program came to an end.

Furthermore, the researcher wondered if the church were asking the right questions and /or if the right questions are asked, would the church be able to deal with or give correct answers. The church in the mind of the researcher has been too busy with budgeting and building projects to notice that men were not present and not only is the church suffering because of the missing link but families and the community as well.

There are yet other questions to be asked, such as, what kinds of evangelistic tools the church has whereby they can reach men who are absent from the community? If the church has evangelistic tools how are they being used? Evangelism is very vital for the life of the church. It is possible that the church has been busy in ministry but has not been

effective in the manner in which the church do ministry. The mission of the church is to make disciples of humankind, but how far is the church willing to go to reach out its hands to invite men into a covenant relationship? The church has to answer the call to reach those who are outside its walls. The call might be challenging but bring people into the community is worth the time spent and the service rendered.

The researcher set out to create a project by using qualitative research that would lead to a connection between the church and un-churched men to build or rebuild a relationship. The researcher discovered that men will respond and react to positive movement toward them. Positive movement such as personal invitations to become involved in and with something that is meaningful. In this research it was important for the men to be invited to participate and the participating led to a better understanding between the church and un-churched men. After working with the men the notion that by nature women are more spiritual than men or the church is only a place for women and children are not a true assessment of the two genders. The church is a place for all God's children. Men's absence from the church is an accident, a very bad misunderstanding, and has been overlooked by the faith community. Therefore the church has the opportunity to minister to all humanity by building relationships.

The church must come to a greater understanding of the great commission of Matthew 28:19 to go into the world to preach, teach and make students for the kingdom. The faith community is a covenant community where humankind comes together in friendship and relationship for the betterment of the community at large. So, do men want a relationship with the faith community, the researcher of this project believes so.

As the faith community builds a more hospitable environment for men and all humankind to function in they must be a genuine sense of love, love which is expressed in the form of honesty and sincere concerns. The researcher believes that humankind responds to this kind of love. People want to be accepted for who they are regardless of their weakness or strength. The researcher believes that sharing God love and living God's love among people will contribute to the building of relationship.

Listening to men was important in this research. Listening was not only important for the men who participated in this research it were also important to the researcher himself. Listening is a mighty tool which allows people to communicate feelings and needs. It was through listening that the researcher was able to understand that humankind has a real need to be heard. The Bible said God's ears are opened to our prayers and because God listen to our prayers we are satisfied as the Holy Spirit reveal God to us. Relationships are continually being built as we listen to each other. The researcher's openness to listening helped to create a better connection with the men as they participate in this project.

Things the Researcher Would Change

The researcher and the research team members put great efforts to connect with un-churched men by attempting to build or rebuild relationships. Now that the project is completed there are some things the researcher would do differently to bring about the desired outcome. The first thing the researcher would do differently would attempt to be more forceful in encouraging other pastors from the community to participate with a project of this type. The absence of men in the church is much larger than the Living Church in the McBee, SC community. This style of project could be a community effort

since the entire community is dealing with the absence of men in the congregation.

Having other pastors participate would bring greater insights to the plight of men in the church. Also the researcher believes that by having more pastors involved it would give the un-churched men a greater opportunity to see that the faith community at large is interested in them.

One other thing the researcher would do differently would be to adopt some style of mentoring partnership to add to the project. During this project everyone always met as a group and when the meetings and activities were over there were little or no contact until the next meeting. If a mentoring partnership was integrated into this project there would be a closer connection between the men and the one on one mentor. The mentors could make contact between meetings as a gesture to say, "How is your day going?" or "We enjoyed the fellowship at the last meeting and are looking forward to the next meeting." The mentor could simply say, "Just checking on you, and if there anything we can do to better serve you let us know?" It is important to do whatever is necessary to bond with people who have been out of the faith community. The mentor would also serve as a support system in and between meetings. Men like all humankind need to feel appreciated, loved and wanted. The researcher believes that mentoring partnerships would be of importance and contribute to the project's effectiveness. The un-churched men often said that they feel like the faith community was not interested in them.

A final thing the researcher would do differently as he tries to build relationship with un-church men, is to allow them to build a model of what they think church should be like. The researcher believes that the church can learn a lot from those who are un-churched. The un-churched know why they are not in church and could be very

instrumental in helping the church understand where the church has missed the mark. The world and times are changing and if the church is to be successful in witnessing to the world about Jesus Christ and bring people into the church there are some things the church must understand. The church must understand that these are changing times, the message may be the same but the method must change. The researcher would like to see what type model the un-churched men would suggest and during the duration of a project of this type try and implement the model along with the other things that were done and see what type effect would come as a result.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The researcher did not have enough time to bring the un-churched men in full fellowship with the faith community. Even though the relationship of the researcher, research team members and the un-churched men grew, there is still much work to do if men are to be brought back into a full relationship with the church. The next step of this project would be to transition the un-churched men back into the congregation of the faith community. Because the un-churched men had a lot of trust issues and some disappointment with the church and are still dealing with some issues concerning the church. Their words are, "We have nothing against God, but we do have some things against the church." The men feel that the church has left them behind.

The researcher would suggest that a project or a ministry of reconciliation be formed to transition men back into the church. Efforts to reconcile means to restore bring back to a rightful place. Reconciliation is for anyone who feels disenchanting with the

church. Disenchanted means to be disappointed, let down, fed up, dissatisfied, sick, discontented, and indifferent. Reconciliation is a way of healing.

The researcher defines a “ministry of reconciliation” as a ministry that ministers to men outside the walls of the church. As mentioned earlier, the un-churched men have no problem with God but are not ready to give themselves to church. Reconciliation ministry would allow men to hear the word of God, and experience the worship of God outside of the church building. Men want Christian interaction but many feel that they are not ready to return to the faith community in an organized setting. Evangelistic ministry is taken the ministry where it is needed. The call of evangelism is to carry the gospel to the place of need. The gospel of Luke 14:23 reports, “The master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.’” It is the ministry of the church to “go” and carry the gospel that humankind can be restored.

A ministry of reconciliation would allow un-churched men to hear the good news of Jesus Christ in a setting in which they are more comfortable. Having a men’s Bible study in a gymnasium and after Bible study playing a basketball game may better appeal to the un-churched men. This would provide more opportunities for the church and the un-churched men to connect and come into a covenant relationship. There are many places that a ministry of reconciliation can take place to receive God’s word. The word of God will work and do the job as the Holy Spirit changes the hearts and the minds of those the Holy Spirit encounters. Therefore, the researcher would suggest cell-meetings for men. Places such as coffee houses, baseball fields, barber shops, YMCA and biker gathering are all good places to gather men for the gospel. This would allow the church to

meet men where they are and the Holy Spirit will work with the un-churched men's hearts and prepare them for the transition back into the faith community where all God's children are in community together. Remember that men have no problem with God, so until we can get them back into the church the task will be to bring God to them. The researcher believes that if ministry of reconciliation is formed, un-churched men will be able to have a successful return to the church of Jesus Christ.

After all the ministry of reconciliation would be to eventually transition men back into the main stream of the church. The ministry of reconciliation is for all God's children, there are many persons who want God but are not willing to go to church at this time. Ministries of reconciliation would serve as a pathway back to the church at an appointed time. There are many, male and females, who have reasons why they do not go to church. The ministry of reconciliation would allow covenant relationship to be formed. After all we are a covenant community and have been call by God to reconciliation.

Conclusion

Men have been disenchanted with the church for some time. The faith community has ignored the disenchantment of men for some time. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 "...I will build my church..." The church belongs to God for all humankind. The church has built walls that have blocked many persons out. The doors have been built with the door knobs on the inside. There are many persons who want to see Jesus Christ but instead seen personalities that do not represent Christ. God can be experienced in many ways, but the church in many instances has confined God to a limited way. Many un-churched persons just want to encounter God and could care less about the mechanics of worship.

The church has been busy but not effective in reaching a lost segment of the community. The findings of this research have been carefully and seriously considered. The researcher entered into this adventure with much prayer and passion. Many avenues must be taken in order to understand the men's dilemma and the church's dilemma. The church is called to do business God's way. George Barna said it well, "We take the first step toward preparing to reach the un-churched when we become living representations of His intended Church, models of faithfulness, obedience, holiness and righteousness. God's Church is not about structures, systems and resources; it is about individual people and our relationship with God. When those associations are in order, we will affect others around us, whether we want to or not."¹

Why has the church not done more to bridge the gender gap in the faith community? The church belongs to God, Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 "...Upon this rock I will build my church..." The church is God's and it is the place that God has called all mankind to come together for worship and fellowship. The researcher of this project believes that God has ordained for him to take this journey in order to understand his own context in a more meaningful way.

The researcher has high hopes that this project will not stop here or just be considered by the Living Church but that it might be a tool that others might take a deeper look and consider the plight of men. The researcher will continue to work and seek out ways that the Living Church can connect with men and coming into covenant relationship that will make a difference. If men continue to be ignored or left out, the church will never reach its full potential. Therefore, if the faith community is going to be effective in building or rebuilding relationships with men they will have to become more

¹ George Barna, *Grow Your Church From the Outside* (Ventura, CA: Regal Gospel Light House, 2002), 17.

personal with the un-churched men. The church will have to know what to speak and when to speak.

The researcher has hope that many others will take up the task and utilize the God given gifts that have been give to the church to reconcile with men and began training and preparing for the return of men. The researcher further hopes that the church will stop talking about “where are the men?” and “why men are not in the church?” These questions have been asked for decades. It is time to find ways in which the church can connect to build or rebuild relationships with men. The researcher believes that the men are waiting to be welcomed back home to the faith community.

The researcher’s prayer is that God will use many others to challenge the church leadership and membership to open the doors of the church and make the way clear so that men will be received with open arms. This project was designed not just for the Living Church and the researcher, but also for all those who have a passion for our brothers, fathers, husbands and sons to return home to the family of God.

APPENDIX A

TRAINING MODEL FOR TEAM WORKERS

Training Model for Team Workers

Prayer

15 minutes of discussion on any concern they might have with the project.

Reading assignment taken from the book written by Steve Sonderman, *How To Build A Life Changing Men's Ministry*. They read chapter 2, "What Are We Aiming At?"

Conversations will start and the outline below will be followed:

- A. How God perceives men and how that will affect our goals for men's ministry.
- B. Who is this biblical man?
- C. What should the end product of our ministry be?
- D. If you and I could take a piece of paper and sketch the ideal man, what would he really look like?

The men we are aiming at have four characteristics:

1. Integrity: Comes from the Hebrew word for "whole," "sound," "unimpaired." It means to possess a genuine heart.
2. Intimacy: Comes from the Latin word *intus*, "within" It's a sharing of life with
3. another. It's allowing others into our heart the inner chamber. It's journeying into
4. their heart. And it means we become one.
5. Identity: An understanding of one's own self.
6. Influence: A man of influence sees the future. He sees the profit his investments will yield many years down the road. And so he pours his time and energy and money into people.¹

Each of the above characteristics were discussed in each session. Training is proposed so that each man who comes to the project will feel a sense of worth. The team workers will have gained a better understanding of and a greater respect for the men who are participating in the project. Supervision was incorporated into this model by using conversations and dialogues regarding the relationship between the researcher, team workers and participants to give oversight and to guide the project. The five stage Supervisory Conversation Model by Kenneth Pohly was utilized in the training sessions.

A second book used by the researcher and the research team members was *No Man Left Behind* written by Patrick Morley, David Delk and Brett Clemmer. Chapters 3, 8, 10 and 11 were especially helpful when dealing with relationships and discipleship of men. Chapter 3 is about being a disciple; it is about getting men attention and keeping them

¹ The definitions of the four characteristics of men are taken from Steve Sonderman Book, *How To Build A Life Changing Men's Ministry*.

focused. Chapter 8 is about vision building. This chapter deals with methods of formulation and building the right strategies for the desired vision. Chapter 10 is about capturing the momentum of men and knowing what drives a man and stops a man from going forward. Chapter 11 is about sustaining momentum through relationships. The book was discussed and affirmed as a tool that would be helpful in dealing with as well as understanding better, the plight of the un-churched.

APPENDIX B
GOALS OF PROJECT

Goals of Project

The goals and outcome of this project will be to create an atmosphere where un-churched men can be brought into relationship with the faith community or at least show a more positive attitude toward the church. In order to measure the desired outcome of men actively participating or having a favorable attitude toward the faith community ministry the researcher will rely upon the men's willingness to participate. The researcher does not want the participants to feel pressured to participate. The men that this project has targeted are non-participants in the ministry of the church, so to have them participating will be sign of success. The researcher expects that men will have a greater attitude of trust toward the church. This trust will be seen as men are willing to come to church and participate if asked.

APPENDIX C
SUPERVISORY CONVERSATION FORMAT STAGES

Supervisory Conversation Format Stages

The supervisory conversation format stages outlined by Dr. Pohly, the interpretation of the stages are that of the researcher.

1. **Informative Stage:** This stage is where the supervisee and the supervisor get acquainted with the situation at hand. In the case of the research team members and the researcher they engaged in what it would be like to be un-churched and pose questions that would help define the situation. Questions such as: "Why should we be interested in the church?" or "Why has the church been silent on this issue?"
2. **Evaluation Stage:** In this stage the research team members and researcher asked questions about the problems faced in the situation. They asked questions concerning the things that would be important to the un-churched. Questions such as: "What can the church do to better the relationship with men?" and "What are men looking for from the church?"
3. **Analysis Stage:** This stage is where the supervisee and the supervisor tried to figure out what would be the best way to be prepared to work with the un-churched. Here is where the research team members and researcher worked to find out what did they really want to achieve in the situation of the un-churched men. Discussions such as: "What are the needs of the un-churched men?" and "Can we make a difference in the life of these men?"
4. **Theologizing Stage:** This is the stage where the supervisee and the supervisor work to bring relevancy between the situation and the gospel. In this case the research team members and the researcher brought together connections between the church and the un-churched and discussed the place for the gospel, God, and the church in the situation of the un-churched men. Discussions such as: "The Church and God in the lives of the un-churched." and "The gospel is the good news and the good news is Jesus Christ is the savior of all humanity."
5. **Commitment Stage:** This stage is the deciding stage. This stage is where you ask questions about what are you going to do with what you have. In the case of the research team members and the researcher they used this as a place for reflections for now and the future as the plight of the un-churched will be an ongoing process for now and the future. Discussions here were: "How do we make this a positive experience for all concerned?" and "Will this become a continuing ministry for the church?"

APPENDIX D
QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONNAIRE I

Fill out the entire questionnaire. Circle the answer that best applies to you.

1. Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
2. Do you believe in God?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
3. Does the church play any role in your life at this time?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
4. Have you ever had a personal relationship with a minister?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
5. How did he or she impact your life?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
6. How relevant do you think the church is today for your life?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
7. Do you have any Christian friends?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
8. How often do you give money to the church?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
9. How likely is it that you will attend church this year?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
10. If you are presently attending church occasionally, how likely is it that you will continue?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
11. How do you rate the Christians that you know as being servants of God?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
12. If you are having personal family problems, how likely is it that you will talk with a pastor?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
13. If you are having personal problems, how likely is it that you will talk with a pastor?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
14. How important is it for you to attend church?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
15. Do you think the church has anything to offer you as a man?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
16. Do you see any good that the church has done in the community?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
17. Did anything happen in your life that is causing you not to attend church?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
18. Do you blame the church for any problems that you are facing now?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much
19. Do you think Christians can be trusted?
a. Not at all b. A little c. Some d. Very much

Questionnaire II

1. Have you ever had a relationship with the faith community?
A. Not at all B. Somewhat C. Yes
2. Do you have family or friends who are an active part of the faith community?
A. Yes B. No
3. When was the last time somebody from the faith community invited you to church?
A. Last week B. Last month C. Last year D. Never
4. By Participating in this project has it changed your perceptions of the faith community?
A. Not at all B. Somewhat C. A great deal D. No comment
5. How much would you say that your opinions concerning the faith community have changed since the first encounter with the researcher and the research team members?
A. Not at all B. Somewhat C. A great deal D. No comment
6. How likely would it be for you to participate in a similar project related to the faith Community?
A. Not at all B. Likely C. Very Likely D. No comment
7. Do you feel that you have gained a better understanding of the Faith community from participating with this project?
A. Not at all B. Somewhat C. A great deal D. No comment

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW FORM

Interview Form

What is your name?

What age group are you 16-20 21-30 31- 40 41 or Older

Are you aware that you are participating in a project concerning men and the church?

Do I have your permission to write down answer to questions that might be asked?

When was the last time you've been to church?

As a child did you attend church? If so, did you go with both mother and father?

If you attended church with parents, how important was worship with the family?

Which parent focused greatest importance on worship?

Did you or did you not enjoy church as a child?

What turns you on or off about the church?

What do you think about God?

How willing are you to go to church now and take part in the activities of the church?

Do you think church has anything to offer you as a man?

When you think of the church what is one of the first things that comes to your mind?

Do you envision the church as a vital part of your life in the future?

What can the church do to gain or regain your trust?

Do you or do you not wish to have a relationship with the faith community?
Why or Why not?

Interviewer (Name)

Date _____

Interviewee (Name)

Date _____

APPENDIX F
AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT

Agreement To Participate In Project**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING**

You have been asked to participate in this project which is a part of the doctoral studies of Bennie L. James, pastor of the Living Church located in McBee, SC. Your participation is important to this study. You understand that these sessions are tape recorded and will be used to collect data for this program.

All the information you provide is confidential and your name will not appear in any public documents. You understand that your information will only be used by the researcher for statistical purposes.

I have read the above information and given my consent and voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX G
OBSERVATIONS

Observations

- Observe body language
- Comfortableness as they encounter with each other-churched with the un-churched.
- Conversations
- Seating (who sat together in groups or sat alone.)
- The atmosphere- was it agreeable for the men

The above observations were discussed orally between the researcher and the research team members.

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